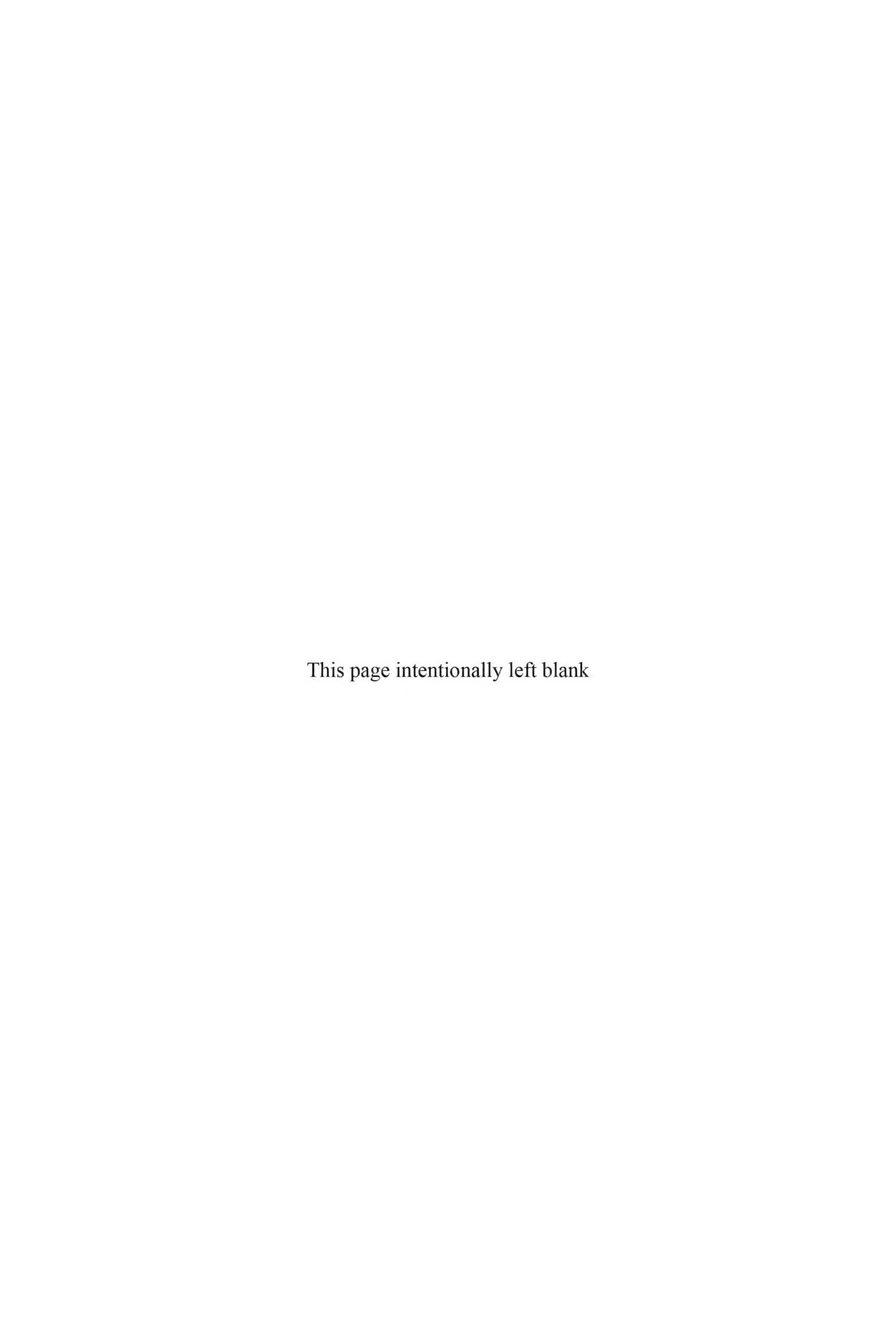


The Philosopher's New Clothes

This book takes a new approach to the question, "Is the philosopher to be seen as universal human being or as eccentric?" Through a reading of the *Theaetetus*, Pappas first considers how we identify philosophers — how do they appear, in particular how do they dress? The book moves to modern philosophical treatments of fashion, and of "anti-fashion." He argues that aspects of the fashion/anti-fashion debate apply to antiquity, indeed that nudity at the gymnasia was an anti-fashion. Thus anti-fashion provides a way of viewing ancient philosophy's orientation toward a social world in which, for all its true existence elsewhere, philosophy also has to live.

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The Philosopher's New Clothes

The *Theaetetus*, the Academy, and Philosophy's Turn against Fashion

Nickolas Pappas



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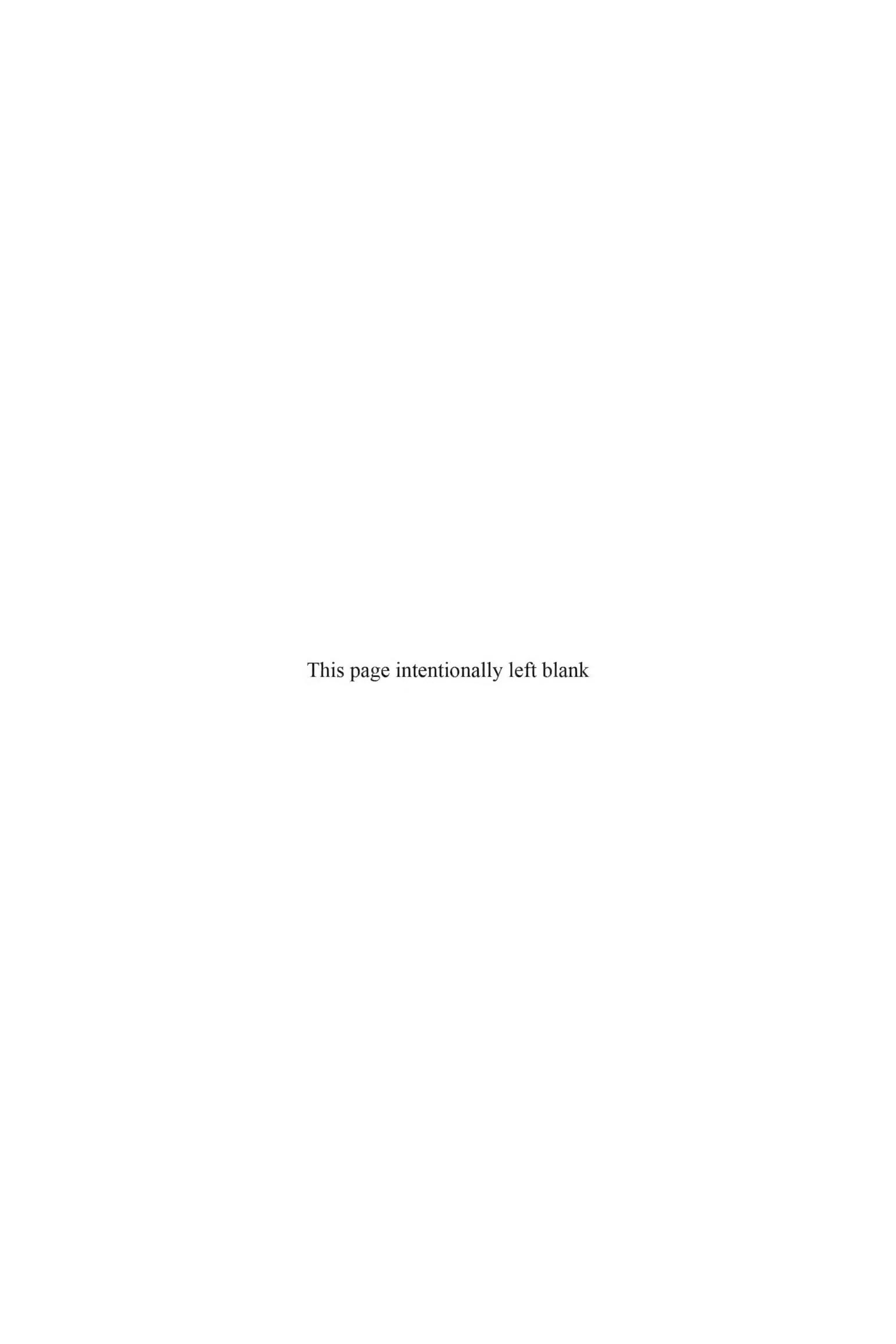
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Contents

	Preface	X
	Abbreviations	xii
	Introduction	1
	What philosophers do 1	
	Philosophy for everyone 2	
	The philosopher as eccentric 4	
	Plato on the normal philosopher 5	
	Socratic legacies 6	
	How the philosopher appears 9	
PA1	RT I	
Socrates in the Theaetetus		13
		10
1	Entering the Theaetetus	15
	Plato's Academy 16	
	The Academy in Plato's Theaetetus 21	
	The frame of the Theaetetus 25	
	Enter Theaetetus 28	
	Socrates as midwife 31	
	No place for philosophy 36	
2	Being a philosopher teaching philosophy	44
	The cost of entering the Academy 45	
	Unwritten teachings 50	
	The shoemaker 55	
	The Cyrenaics 57	
	Pigs and dogheads 61	
	School as institution 64	
	Conclusion 67	

3	Philosophy's first citizen	74
	Wrestling and civilization 74	
	Where the wrestling happens 78	
	Two myths of philosophy's beginning (archê) 82	
	Wonder and the rainbow 84	
	Iris the teras 87	
	Socrates the philosopher 88	
	A new myth of philosophy's archê 90	
	Philosopher as headmaster 92	
	The philosophical gentleman 94	
	Beyond the Theaetetus 100	
DΔ	ART II	
	nilosophy regarding fashion	109
•	mosophy regulating lusinion	107
4	Fashion in philosophy	111
	Fashion thinking 112	
	The emperor's new clothes 114	
	Philosophy of fashion today 116	
	Imitation according to the tradition 118	
	Beau Brummell, beyond imitating 121	
	The foreigner 124	
5	Anti-fashion	130
	Alternative to fashion 130	
	The tradition of anti-fashion 132	
	Anti-fashion today 136	
	The suit 138	
	Denim jeans 141	
	Body art 143	
	Black 144	
	Black and the body 147	
6	Fashion in antiquity	155
	The threat of anachronism: ancient fashion? 156	
	Diversity and contingency in dress 158	
	Change in dress 161	
	Justifications for change in dress 165	
	Plato's Republic 167	
	"Better" 169	

211

PART III The philosopher's new clothes

There is no outfit like Greek nudity
Nudity in modern Europe 181
Nudity for non-Greeks 184
Recent treatments of Greek nudity 186
Pausanias 189
Inspection, sexual and otherwise 191
Chaste nudity 192
Ritual nudity 196
Ritual nudity and athletics 198

8 You can tell a philosopher

Civic nudity 199

Theaetetus 203

The Cynic display of withdrawal 211
The limits of philosophical costume 213
Platonic philosophical nudity 217
Platonic anti-fashion 220
Thoreau 222
Kierkegaard 224

Index 231

Preface

I began what became this book a decade ago, upon being invited to contribute to a philosophers' volume on fashion. At the time I was deep in reading about classical antiquity in the belief, which has only grown stronger since, that a proper reception of philosophical works from antiquity called for more familiarity than philosophers possess with the culture that those writings arose in – familiarity with the literary culture but also with ancient historical writings and with the daily life that one glimpses through ancient books: the religious experiences, politics, sexual mores, dress, and athletics, down to the food and drink and the containers they came in.

Maybe these are things to look into. When Socrates refers to a shoemaker at his last, does he have someone particular in mind? Why does he compare philosophy to a rainbow?

So Ron Scapp and Brian Seitz asked me to write something for their anthology *Fashion Statements* when I was thinking about ancient material culture, and the subject of fashion led me to the problem of Greek nudity. You would expect one *sine qua non* in fashion, that it include clothing; but here were the Greeks, naked in every museum as no one else was in comparably ancient images. It was as if they had found a way to enact the pressures of fashion without a stitch. Would this be worth saying in a conversation about fashion?

From the start it seemed to me that what I had to say about nudity and fashion would have to anchor itself in Plato. His character Pausanias in the *Symposium*, enunciating what sounds like an Athenian male citizen's view of the world, distinguishes Greek from barbarian by three signs: naked exercise, homosexuality, and philosophy. Precisely because this remark had the complacent sound of one devoted to his civilization's assumptions, it seemed to connect nudity to philosophy in the popular mind (insofar as Plato understood that mind).

Thus the topic of fashion focused the question for me of how the philosopher lets himself appear, in ways that this book as a whole is meant to show.

Soon I found the subject of the philosopher's appearing in the world intersecting in Plato's *Theaetetus* with references to schools of philosophy, and worries about what becomes of philosophy in school, more such references than in any other Platonic work. Responding to what seemed to me at first like an entirely distinct invitation, the proposal from Burt Hopkins that he and I organize a

workshop on the *Theaetetus*, I saw that that dialogue teemed with points of contact with the tangle of topics that fashion had also led me into.

And once the *Theaetetus* came to seem unquestionably, to me, a meditation on the philosopher's place in the world, I saw the possibility of a book like this one. In a sense I wrote this book to articulate what I had experienced as automatic connections of ideas.

Help in articulating the connections came from all over. Heather Reid's comments improved an earlier draft of the book; a special tip of the hat to her. Larissa Bonfante's work, and then conversation with her, took me deep into the question of Greek nudity. Mary Wiseman is too gracious to remember the encouragement she gave this project, but I remember it well. Peter Lamarque published one piece, which later became a chapter of this book, with an enthusiasm that helped me put the other pieces together.

My many conversations with Joseph McElroy and Ken Johnson inform this book's argument but also its writing and its sense of itself. And what I have learned about antiquity from Jennifer Roberts appears everywhere.

The City College of New York supported my research with material resources and well-timed releases. I especially want to thank Geraldine Murphy and Eric Weitz, consecutive Deans of Humanities and the Arts at City College, for their gifted leadership and for the specific help and encouragement they gave me. Finally I am pleased to owe two kinds of thanks to John Greenwood, a long-time mentor and ally within the City University but also a fellow philosopher, whose own work came into a pivotal part of this book's argument.

Along with the thanks, one regret: Adrienne Mayor's excellent new book *The Amazons* was not available to me until after this one was in production. The reader of *The Amazons* will see where its chapters on tattoos and trousers would have added to Part II.

Abbreviations

Where an author is known for only one work (e.g. Herodotus), that author's abbreviated name is used to refer to that work.

Ael. Aelian

VH Varia Historia

Aesch. Aeschylus

Choeph. Choephoroi
Eum. Eumenides
Pers. Persians
Phin. Phineas
Supp. Suppliants

Aeschin. Aeschines

Ctes. Against Ctesiphon Tim. Against Timarchus

Anecd. Bach. Par. Anecdota Graeca Parisiensis

Ap. Rhod. Apollonius Rhodius Argonautica

Apul. Apuleius, The Golden Ass

Ar. Aristophanes

Ach. Acharnians

Eq. Equites = Knights

Arist. Aristotle

Eth. Nic. Nicomachean Ethics

Metaph. Metaphysics Mete. Meteorologica

Pol. Politics
Rh. Rhetoric
Sens. De sensu
Top. Topics

"Arist." Pseudo-Aristotle

Const. Constitution of Athens

Aristox. Aristoxenus

Harm. Elements of Harmony

Arr. Arrian

Anab. Anabasis

Artem. Artemidorus, *Oneirocriticus*Ath. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*

Bacchyl. Bacchylides

Catull. Catullus, Carmina Celsus Med. Celsus, De Medicina

Cic. Cicero

Flac. Pro Flacco Luc. Lucullus Off. De officiis

Tusc. Tusculan Disputations

Clem. Al. Clement of Alexandria

Strom. Stromata

Curt. Q. Curtius Rufus, History of Alexander the Great

Dem. Demosthenes

Arist. Against Aristocrates

Diod. Sic. Diodorus Siculus

Bibl. Hist. Bibliotheca Historica

Diog. Laert. Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Eminent Philosophers

"Diog." Pseudo-Diogenes

Crat. To Crates
Hacet. To Hacetas

Dion. Hal. Dionysius of Halicarnassus

Ant. Rom. Antiquitates Romanae = Roman Antiquities

Eur. Euripides

Alc. Alcestis
Auto. Autolycus
Cyc. Cyclops
El. Electra
Hec. Hecuba

Phoen. Phoenician Women

Rhes. Rhesus Thes. Theseus

Euseb. Eusebius

Chronicle

Hist. eccl. Ecclesiastical History

Praep. evang. Praeparatio evangelica = Preparation for the

Gospel

Eust. Eustathius of Thessalonica

Il. Commentary on Iliad

Gal. Galen

Ball Exercise with the Small Ball

xiv Abbreviations

Hecat. Hecataeus of Miletus

Her. Heraclitus

Herodotus, Histories

Hes. Hesiod

Theog. Theogony

Hippol. Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies

Hom. Homer

Il. IliadOd. Odyssey

Iren. Irenaeus

Adv. haer. Adversus Haereses

Isoc. Isocrates

Antid. Antidosis

Lucian Lucian

Cyn. The Cynic

De mort. Peregr. Death of Peregrinus

Vit. auct. Vitarum auctio = $Bi\delta n$ Prasis "Ways-of-

Life Sale"

Mart. Martial

Ep. Epigrams

Nep. Nepos

Epam. Epaminondas

Parm. Parmenides

Paus. Pausanias, Description of Greece A. Persius Flaccus, Satires

Petronius Petronius

Satr. Satyricon

Philo Philo Judaeus

Every Good Every Good Man is Free

Spec. leg. De specialibus legibus = The Special Laws

Philostratus Philostratus

Gym. On Gymnastics

VA Vita Apollonii = Life of Apollonius

Phld. Philodemus

IE Index Academicorum

Pind. Pindar

Pyth. Pythian Ode

Pl. Plato

Ap. Apology
Chrm. Charmides
Crat. Cratylus
Cri. Crito
Euthphr. Euthyprho

Euthyd. Euthydemus
Grg. Gorgias

Hip. mai. Hippias Major Hip. min. Hippias Minor L7 Seventh Letter

Lach. Laches
Menex. Menexenus

Phd. Phaedo Phdr. Phaedrus Phlb. Philebus Parmenides Prm. Prt. Protagoras Rep. Republic Sophist Soph. Sym. Symposium Theaetetus Tht. Ti. Timaeus

Plin. Pliny (the Elder), Natural History

Plut. Plutarch

Adv. Col.
Against Colotes
Ages.
Life of Agesilaus
Alc.
Life of Alcibiades
Alex.
Life of Alexander

Amat. Amatorius

Arist. Life of Aristides
Caes. Life of Caesar

Cat. Mai. Cato Maior = Life of Cato the Elder

De fac. De facie in orbe lunae = The Face in the

Moon

De frat. amor. De fraterno amore = On Brotherly Love De Pyth. De Pythiae oraculis = Why the Pythia Does

Not Give Oracles in Verse

Isoc. Life of Isocrates
Lyc. Life of Lycurgus

Mor. Moralia

Per. Life of Pericles
Phoc. Life of Phocion
Sol. Life of Solon
Thes. Life of Theseus

"Plut." Pseudo-Plutarch

Train. On Training

Procl. Proclus

Euclid On Book I of Euclid's Elements

Sext. Sextus Empiricus

Math. Against Mathematicians Pyr. Outlines of Pyrrhonism

Shab. Babylonian Talmud, tractate on Shabbat

xvi Abbreviations

Simpl. Simplicius

in Phys. On Aristotle's Physics

Sozom. Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*Steph. Byz. Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnica*

Stob. Stobaeus, Anthology Strab. Strabo, Geography

Tac. Tacitus

Ann. Annales

Tert. Tertullian

Ad nat. Ad nationes

Them. Themistius, Orations

Theophr. Theophrastus

Char. Characters

Thgn. Theognis, Fragments

Thuc. Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War

Xen. Xenophon

Ages. Agesilaus

Cyn. Cynegetus = On Hunting

Eq. mag. De equitum magistro = Hipparchus

Mem. Memorabilia

Introduction

What philosophers do

Philosophers in America find it awkward when strangers ask "What do you do?" Those from other nations may have had similar experiences on airplanes and trains. But mention this predicament to a group of philosophy professors in the US and you may marvel at how many of them have stories to tell about their halting start, the misunderstandings, sometimes the half-truth that sounds more modest, "I teach philosophy." One anecdote circulates of a guileless practitioner who said "I am a philosopher" only to have his travel companion reply "What are some of your sayings?" 1

It feels more modest to say that you teach philosophy, as if because one could do such a thing without boasting the title "philosopher" – because (of course) one takes "philosopher" to be a boast. But then most philosophy since Kant has been the work of professors. Before him modern European philosophers had a variety of occupations; since him, there has been a single standard thing for philosophers to do.

Interesting that Kant is also the most recent of the modern philosophers to be accepted as canonical in the analytic and continental traditions alike. For all their differences the two traditions share this professional orientation; it may even be that the divide between the two philosophies depends on both sides' occupying departments of philosophy in universities. Philosophers and other scholars can still line up on one side or other of a debate without institutional affiliations, but there is something about life in schools that encourages the articulation of *schools of thought* and long-standing fights between them.

What else follows from the institutional existence of philosophy? It means that philosophers can teach for a living, but then so can physicists and architects, or doctors and lawyers, even artists and composers. More than that, philosophers are practically required to work in the academy to meet the criterion for being seen as philosophers at all. And in this sense the answer to the stranger "I teach philosophy" is not a dodge. Teaching philosophy all but constitutes being a philosopher.

Philosophy's life in the academy brings undeniable advantages to the subject as well as to the philosophers. It is one of the reasons the subject has a

2 Introduction

curriculum, which means that some topics lie at the heart of the discipline, others at its edges, still others having been declared not-philosophy; and that means the student takes up some subjects before others, presumably mastering the introductory topics before moving on to the more advanced. For the philosopher it brings the advantage of making you a professional rather than an eccentric.

Philosophy for everyone

What philosophy thus professionalized does *not* have, or not in the way that it thinks it should, is an audience. This expectation of a broader audience is sometimes seen as philosophy's desire for social activism. Beyond politics, philosophers and non-philosophers may believe that philosophy has something to offer a thoughtful public: methods of thinking, experience about philosophical theories, possibly some secrets that people would want to acquire and would profit from learning about.

For all the wisdom and justice there may be in the desire to bring philosophy to a larger audience, such motivations obscure a contrary condition in philosophy's relationship to human beings, which might be one respect in which philosophy differs from other disciplines. For philosophy is and understands itself to be either continuously, or at important junctures, doing the kind of thing that all people do. Professionals do more when they philosophize than others do, with the expertise that comes of long practice – but not as if they had a spectrophotometer while everyone else saw colors. On this understanding of the subject, philosophy even exists academically because it exists among humans as we know them.

But in that case, for philosophy to lack an audience would mean not that the public is being deprived of news that philosophers need to bring out of the universities – that would be unfortunate but no threat to the subject – rather that something has broken the communication between human philosophizing and the professionalized version of it. Indeed a long-standing consequence of philosophy's establishment in the academy is the threat to its own conception (one of its conceptions) of what the subject is. Establishment in the academy suggests that philosophy does not speak for all rational human beings.

You can see philosophy's sense of its universal methods in (among other places) the pre-eminence it grants to logic. Why do most philosophers make their students study logic? Philosophical thinking ought to be logically consistent, but so should everyone's thinking. Logically inconsistent theories in chemistry and history are no good, and probably more consequentially no good than logically inconsistent philosophical theories. But philosophers traditionally promote logic on the grounds that it is what all human beings do, or can do—often: what all humans do a little and can do much more. From logic's point of view, in other words, philosophical thinking is nothing but thinking.

An idea of logic surfaces in the poem of Parmenides, by which I mean an idea of some feature of that poem's reasoning that makes the reasoning

successful. For a long time this feature of reasoning has been known as validity, and we call an argument valid when it possesses that logical property. Given the premises, the conclusion is true – "has to be true," as people often feel moved to add: "must follow on pain of contradiction." Parmenides can't call his own reasoning "valid" because no such technical term exists yet; but in the longest fragment of his poem that survives he argues from the nature of what is that it cannot come into existence or perish. And this "cannot" has to be true. The pistios ischus "power of trust" and dikê "justice" prevent such events.2 The coming into existence of what is would go against what the argument has already shown. And calling the demands of logical consistency "justice" draws attention to both its compulsion and its universality. We continue to call scientific principles "laws" (presumably just laws as opposed to a tyrant's whim) in recognition of their equal applicability everywhere; Parmenidean justice likewise applies to whatever is.

A more obscure case comes from the generation before Parmenides. Heraclitus distinguished between listening to him and listening to his logos.3 His audience should attend to more than the personal authority that commonly commands agreement. This listening is not quite a matter of attending to logic. For all the things that logos can mean in his statement - "speech and account" but also "story, word, reason" and "gathering of arguments" - I do not see its meaning "deductive logic." And yet the logos does putatively reflect on the human capacity for thinking. Heraclitus scorns those philosophers and non-philosophers who possess learning without nous "intelligence," as if his own improved reasoning will differ from any particular branch of learning – as if it amounted to thinking as such.

For Heraclitus, thinking seems to be an act of interpretation. Apollo "neither speaks forth nor conceals but signifies,"⁵ which must mean that the human who wants to take in divine wisdom tries to read the ambiguous clues the god parcels out. The human thinker interprets what the god hints at; human thinking might even consist in this interpretive activity.

Meanwhile, faulty thinking is characterized as taking in sights and sounds but misunderstanding them. Heraclitus says that eyes and ears work as bad witnesses to people who have barbarous psuchas "souls that are barbarous, foreign, non-Greek."6 He pictures the eyes and ears' coming to the soul as witnesses do, or spies, to tell what they have seen and heard. But they report their news pointlessly if they have crossed a border unawares and now present their testimony to a soul that speaks no Greek, which is to say doesn't know how to think, which is to say to interpret.

The interpretive activity to which Heraclitus subjects the hints that nature gives marks him as a philosopher as opposed to other humans, and yet is available to all. When he says that the souls in Hades have the power of smell, he must be referring to all souls, for all souls end up there. And smell would be able to discern all things if they burned into smoke – to interpret them, I take it - which all things presumably are already, given that the world is a great fire.⁷ Although Heraclitus finds incomprehension everywhere he also finds it abnormal; it is like being foreign in your soul. And being a philosopher is the oxymoronic state of *exceptional normalcy*.

For a third testimony to this view of philosophy as the thinking that every human does, let me cite Aristotle, in the opening pages from the Metaphysics that give a portrait of the highest philosophy. Aristotle sees Heraclitus and Parmenides as possibilities for philosophy that rival his own, but he begins this work with a sentence in the same inclusionary spirit as theirs. "All human beings oregontai to know," meaning that they stretch out for knowledge, they yearn to know, have an appetite for knowing.⁸ This is the same work in which Aristotle will say philosophy begins in wonder, making clear in his explication of the claim that the wonder is a perennial possibility for human beings9 which then makes philosophy a standing possibility for us all as well. And that he uses a verb (oregontai) about desiring food or sex for the human pursuit of knowledge is a reminder that despite the distinctiveness he will attribute to wisdom, or first philosophy (that being the subject matter that the Metaphysics separates from ordinary knowledge), still the extraordinary knowledge that is first philosophy and the ordinary knowledge it stands apart from are marked at a more fundamental level by what they share with one another, which is what the philosopher shares with the rest of the species.

The philosopher as eccentric

If its audience belongs to philosophy by dint of the normalcy of philosophical thinking, there is a contrary picture of the philosopher that would make that idea of the subject unintelligible, which is the picture of the philosopher as misfit and eccentric. It is a picture at least as familiar as that of philosophy as human thought in general.

Nietzsche's name for such a misfit is Socrates, whom *Birth of Tragedy* identifies as the great calamity to have befallen ancient Greece (and therefore everyone we know). As the cause of tragic culture's suicide, Socrates cannot have been the naturally occurring product of that culture; so Nietzsche calls him a monster or freak. Lest that sound too mythically powerful and therefore return Socrates to an earlier time of demigods and Hydras, Nietzsche makes this a monstrosity *per defectum*, overgrown by virtue of having an aspect of himself weirdly *under*developed.¹⁰

Nietzsche gives the philosopher a more rounded portrayal in *Genealogy of Morals*, but some of his analysis of Socrates remains: *Genealogy of Morals* still separates "the philosopher" from normal reproduction. The philosopher that Nietzsche describes in the book's third essay is unmarried and maybe a virgin (anyway like Kant resembling a "country parson"), in any case ascetic to the point of childlessness, therefore compelled to reproduce through some new uncanny means. ¹¹ As *Birth of Tragedy* renders Socrates' birth inexplicable, *Genealogy of Morals* permits no ordinary genealogy for philosophers as such. They have no normal means of making more philosophers. Call this the terminus of philosophical eccentricity, that there is no place for philosophy's practitioner in the natural order.

Nietzsche hardly needed to invent the eccentricity of Socrates, when people in Plato's dialogues are already calling him atopos "odd, absurd." This is not even to mention the way Aristophanes portrays him in Clouds, empty-pocketed yet full of himself and spouting new religions. Nietzsche uses Aristophanes as his insider guide to antiquity's perception of Socrates; but the eccentricity of the man is already plentifully evident in the dialogues, which portray him as off, or out of, step, as a foreigner might be. In Plato's version of his defense speech Socrates compares himself to a xenos "stranger, foreigner," having found himself in court not knowing how things are said and done there. "If I did in fact happen to be a foreigner, you would forgive me if I spoke in the voice and with the manner in which I was reared; so now I ask that you permit the manner of my speech here," because telling the straight truth is out of place in the Athenian courtroom. Like a foreigner, but the type who comes out of nowhere, Socrates has spent his life asking how things are done here and simultaneously does not seem to care about what matters to locals.

Something of the Socratic arrival among humans will turn up in Augustine, as Wittgenstein saw in his diagnosis of the Confessions. "Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a strange country," as if foreign origin and therefore atopia were continuing to serve as the philosopher's model for coming to knowledge.

Plato on the normal philosopher

Is the problem this oxymoron I proposed, "exceptional normalcy," that identifies both the human standing of philosophy - its beginning with what everyone knows; its methods the laws of thought as universally employed - and the philosopher's outstanding status? Does that conception of philosophical method put pressure on the philosopher to be something more than a characteristic human being, therefore a strange one?

Both responses to the oxymoron appear in Plato's dialogues, which sometimes make philosophy a systematic process and explicitly like a formal lesson, but can also make it look like a guerrilla tactic, with spontaneous philosophical scrutiny coming out of nowhere. Some dialogues exhibit only the misfit and gadfly - the Apology of course, in which Socrates presents himself as that breed of insect sent to torment the sleeping horse of the Athenian populace; also the Symposium, whose Socrates stands unresponsive both within a peacetime city and on a military campaign, detaching himself from fellow citizens to chase down a philosophical question. But in other dialogues the philosopher enters as professional instructor. Plato's Sophist and Statesman particularly fit this description, with their new chief philosopher the Stranger from Elea to take the young would-be philosophers through their paces. And however odd Socrates himself may be in the Symposium, he has Diotima describe a philosophical pedagogy that requires a "leader," as if reaching the best kind of knowledge is not accomplished alone. 14

In the most difficult cases a dialogue has the philosopher play both roles, even unstably, so that its reader wonders whether this person is here to teach as other teachers do or to subvert everything we call instruction.

The pages ahead will start with one moment of instability in Plato, possibly the critical moment after which he all but banished Socrates from the dramatic world of his dialogues. That it is a single moment does not make it an exceptional occurrence in Plato, for the same instability runs through the *Republic* like a crack through the good city's foundation. The *Republic* has imagined a city that ends the philosopher's oddness along the way to (and as an essential step in) eliminating faction, plutocracy, imperialism, and other ills. In this city philosophers have an occupation and undergo official training. They are bred for their work, the philosopher-rulers being mostly the children of philosopher-rulers. In the Platonic city, the query "Where do philosophers come from?" turns from a puzzle about these unpredictable beings (if not an exasperated rhetorical question) into a practical challenge in answer to which the *Republic* works out a eugenic system.

The *Republic*'s philosophers are so at home in the new city that they guard its gates and turn away the dramatic poet come to demonstrate his works. In this exchange the dramatic poets who had been citizens in a city like Athens are turned into strangers, while the homeless philosopher becomes a city elder. ¹⁵

And yet what makes the entire system and the new rulers' excellence possible is their wish not to possess political power. They discharge their patriotic duty as governors with the expectation of retirement to a better life, this being a period during which they will contemplate questions possessed of greater being than political ones.¹⁶

Plato's plan has more than a little shrewdness to it, even enough to qualify it as a political scheme. But the philosophers' preferred activity leaves them at heart, or in part, non-rulers, and as such still outsiders within the gates. Indeed the Republic's foundational story for metaphysically informed politics founders on the question of whether philosophers belong inside the city or outside it. The prisoners in the cave represent human beings as such and not just the benighted people found in contemporary Athens. Ignorance is the human birthright not to be annulled by good governance. So the philosopher's agreement to rule in the new city is referred to as going back down into the cave. But that means that whatever constitution the cave's prisoners live under, they will be jeering at the returned escapee as Athenians jeered at Socrates. They will execute him if they can. 17 And with this prediction the enlightened philosopher reacquires the misfit status that the Republic's regime had hoped to end. In the middle of the Republic's portrayal of its good city, in Plato's unimpeded fantasy of the world in which philosophy is the establishment, the other philosopher, the lone eccentric, pushes his way back into the picture.

Socratic legacies

The misfit side of Socrates inspired emulators from the first generation after Socrates' death, most famously among the Cynics. Antisthenes was credited with founding that school, but the really colorful example of Cynicism was Diogenes of Sinope; and the two ways of understanding the Socratic

philosopher, or the philosopher, were sometimes dramatized as a confrontation between him and Plato. In the most famous anecdote that contains the two of them, the Academy defined "human being" as a featherless biped and Diogenes responded by throwing a plucked chicken into the school saying "Behold the Platonic man!"¹⁸

All the wit belongs to Diogenes in these stories, which were evidently circulated by the Cynics. It is a wit directed not against Plato alone but against Plato at the Academy, and in this example Plato engaged in the Academy's enterprise of defining each natural kind in the language of genus and differentia (thus "biped" specified as "featherless" to yield "human"). Plato as professorial philosopher is ensconced in his Academy and Diogenes carps at it from outside.

For we do have to see Plato's Academy as a philosophical institution in a substantive sense. The philosopher-teacher may have flourished in the modern university, but long before Kant philosophers began functioning as teachers, and identifying themselves in terms of the school they belonged to. They had certainly done so by the time that Plato bought land by a gymnasium outside Athens and established his school on that place or topos.

Although Diogenes, the one outside the school, had never met Socrates, the story goes that Plato called him "Sôkratês mainomenos" a crazed or maddened Socrates. 19 Those words suggest the degree to which Diogenes reminded people of Socrates – a Socrates writ large, or better still a scrawled Socrates, the scrawl exaggerating the eccentricity already in the man. And that this description is attributed to Plato testifies to his own distance (real or perceived) from the maddened side of Socrates. Surely it is also significant that the phrase "a Socrates maddened" has the form of a definition giving genus and differentia, as if the Plato of that anecdote had come to see Socrates as a human genus within which Diogenes represented the crazy species. In the hands of systematic philosophy an unnatural kind gets the same definition as a natural one.

An anecdote from Roman times, despite its late date, has the virtue of focusing on what Plato represents in this contrast of philosophical types, what the other Socratic species is, ringing true as stereotype even if it should be historically false. Our source Aelian writes that Plato went to the Olympics. As everyone attending the Games did he had to provide for his shelter, and Plato shared a tent with strangers. These strangers so enjoyed his sunousia "company, collegiality" that they were pleased to have met the man, despite his never mentioning Socrates or the Academy. He only told them his name was Plato. Sometime later these tent-mates visited Athens, and on that occasion they asked Plato to take them to his homônumon "homonym, namesake," that student of Socrates who was at the Academy. With a gentle smile, as was his way, Plato told them "I am the very man."²⁰

The restraint or moderation that distinguishes Plato as philosopher and head of the Academy, which you might see as his inheritance from an unmaddened Socrates, is the virtue that renders a man, acting in his usual way, indistinguishable from any other Greek of the same name. Any gentleman might go to the Olympics. A normal man might even have competed there in his youth, if he'd had the talent for a sport. They said that Plato had wrestled in the games held at the Isthmus of Corinth, i.e. the Isthmian Games.²¹ Now in middle age the normal man would go to watch and to praise the athletes. Every man there would find some lodging, which could well bring him into a tent with strangers. And every well-heeled man will participate in a congenial *sunousia*, whether as fellow human beings keep company with one another or as philosophers do, in their special manner, with other philosophers, for since Plato's time *sunousia* carried a narrow sense of membership in a school as well as its general sense of sociability.

Some anecdotes put Diogenes at the Olympics too. He stands out in those tales, though not as an athlete, rather making sure to distinguish himself from both athletes and fellow spectators. If a herald at the Games announces Dioxippus as the victor, Diogenes shouts back that Dioxippus merely achieved victory over slaves, whereas he Diogenes was victorious over men. Asked if there had been much of a crowd at the Olympics he'd gone to, Diogenes said "A lot of crowd but few human beings."²²

At least in those cases the other spectators realized they had a philosopher amongst them. How are we supposed to tell a philosopher from anyone else if the philosopher is a person who does only what everyone else can do? Or is the only alternative going to be personal oddity verging on madness? The two ways of taking Socrates and taking on his legacy have become two ways of thinking about who the philosopher is. There is the absurd character, brilliant but strange, who seems to have dropped out of the sky; but also the professional possessed of knowledge and equipped to pass it on, propped behind a lectern. One is peculiar but wears the cloak of moral authority. The other, considered as logical animal, perhaps the one unmarked beast, characteristically human.

And if philosophical thinking is a matter of thinking as human beings do, as we think characteristically or essentially, the two images for the philosopher become two possibilities for the human who is interested in becoming serious. Does living according to principle mean living markedly and in a way that everyone will see a mile away? Or is it more likely to resemble a harmonious existence with one's fellow citizens?

It is hard to know where to begin in responding to such questions. We are so accustomed to identifying ourselves as something additional to being human that those who seek to achieve a plain humanity in their persons become *characters*. The Cynics pursued independence from the customs that governed any particular city, not in order to replace those customs with others but so that they could live according to no custom at all, naturally, the way one lives just by dint of being human. But the result was as great an eccentricity as philosophy has ever produced.

The challenge is to address such questions without frivolousness. For I will not try to deny the ambivalence with which philosophers contemplate the choice I am describing. Haven't we gotten off the point somehow? The terms of one's personal presentation, terms of appearance, make a show out of what should be a life. And when appearance is at stake we run the risk of vanity,

which could be called contrary to philosophical seriousness if it were not already contrary to every other way of being serious.

Nietzsche signals his distance from vanity when he calls it an atavism, a last recurrent phenomenon from the deep past to be contrasted with his own philosophy seen as first occurrent manifestation from the far future. And Plato and Diogenes face each other in one tale with mutual charges of vanity. Diogenes tramples on Plato's carpets saying he is stamping on Plato's kenospoudia "frivolity, attention to nothing." Plato answers that Diogenes is revealing his own tuphos "delusion, affectation, vanity" in the act of seeming not to be vain. 23

If the threat of vanity waits behind both manners of philosophical presentation, the bad manners in these accusations show that fending off vanity is at stake on both sides, in Cynic and Academic claims to seriousness. Diogenes understands his unsociability as a response to Plato, while Plato takes his sociability to ward off the affectation he sees in that response. You can only scoff at both of them if you have never worried about your own vanity.

How the philosopher appears

This book will come at the portrayal of ancient philosophers (and later specimens) from several directions at once, collecting themes and premises in a way that adds substance to the whole picture. A few orienting words at first might help to keep the details in their proper places.

As the book's title implies, one central question involves nudity and fashion – nudity understood as a fashion if possible. The question of what that could mean occupies Part II of this book, which inquires into philosophy's treatment of fashion and alternatives to it. When philosophers do ask what drives fashion, they tend to blame social imitativeness. Nativism enters the story too, because imitation alone won't explain where change in fashion comes from. That must be the work of foreigners, who now carry the blame for whatever in fashion cannot be attributed to passive mimicry among one's own people.

One response to modern fashion has been the attitude toward dress now known as anti-fashion. Jeans, black clothing, the business suit, and the shaved head have nothing else in common, but they are all ways of dressing among fashions without following their lead. Anti-fashion is of the fashion world but not in it, and those like philosophers who find fashion an impulse to be resisted have turned to anti-fashion as an alternative. This is even true, Part II argues, in antiquity, a time that lacks many elements of modern fashion, yet does contain the social fashion pressures that give the modern debate a meaningful ancient application.

The philosopher who cares that fashion exists wonders what garment suits philosophy, above all given these categories we seem to be left with, citizen and foreigner. Does citizenship in their societies - societies they sometimes make for themselves, sometimes find themselves in – turn the philosophers into conformists? Or are they, as the lone figures to avoid conformism, therefore the only true citizens? Part I of the book moves toward the same predicament from

another beginning, in a reading of the first half of Plato's *Theaetetus*. There (as I understand the dialogue) the problem of how a philosopher appears emerges from considerations of philosophical schools, and where a philosopher belongs in a world of schools.

After the death of Socrates, numerous Socratics collected themselves into like-minded groups. ²⁴ The *Theaetetus* touches on the Platonists and Cynics, but also alludes to the Cyrenaics, maybe the Megarians, and explicitly the non-Socratic Ephesians, and the school of the sophist Protagoras. The dialogue's inquiry "What is knowledge?" unfolds, during the first half of the *Theaetetus*, against images of the teaching of philosophy; philosophers of both the institutional variety and the wild type; and philosophy as naked exercise and proper dress. Being a midwife (as the *Theaetetus* calls him but no other dialogue does), Socrates poises unstably between two manifestations, the eccentric who belongs nowhere among human societies and the teacher who lives in a new kind of philosophical society.

The *Theaetetus* also identifies a mythic beginning for philosophy. In fact it speaks of two beginnings, and two characters out of myth (ocean; rainbow) that Socrates associates with the first appearance of philosophy.

Or should we say not "first appearance" but rather the plural "first appearances," to leave open the possibility that philosophy begins repeatedly, in the sense that proverbs say long journeys begin (all of them, every time) with a first step? Can philosophy have had a beginning to be recorded in the history of institutions and yet also find new first moments in individuals, which might be of interest to biographers? It proves to be one of the many marvels about the *Theaetetus* that it reveals this ambiguity about philosophy's start or starts. And that ambiguity makes it possible to picture the philosopher both as Academic and as Cynic, the two kinds I began by wondering about, two kinds of thinkers portrayed in ancient statuary: madmen like Diogenes, gentlemen like Plato.

(There is no hiding the fact that madmen and gentlemen – or freeborn local countrymen – are both men. The question of how women present themselves in philosophy does come up, as Chapter 6 will point out. But it is an undeniable fact about the period I am looking at that the place for women remains defined by the places that men occupy. And if the word "gentleman" sounds anachronistic in addition to being exclusively male, nevertheless as a social ideal it is the closest I think we can come in modern English to the Greek *kalos k'agathos* literally "fine and good" but generally a well-heeled man.)

So now suppose that the philosophical characters I describe in Part I find themselves in the world sketched out in Part II, namely a world of dress and social imitativeness, the makings of a fashion world that has also (already) begun to develop a counter-world anticipating anti-fashion. Dress comes before philosophy on any story of philosophy's origins; and in this sense Part II works as a backstory within this book's overall narrative, a flashback from which Part III returns with an image from the *Theaetetus*. Socrates at the place of naked exertion, an Athenian gymnasium, tells his aging friend Theodorus to strip and philosophize. Part III looks more closely into classical Greek nudity, a

peculiarity even in the ancient Mediterranean, and still peculiar today. The unclothed body does not exist apart from all social meanings but rather carries different meanings from place to place, and narrowing down what Plato would have been stripping to show takes us another step closer to the appearance of philosophy.

As Part III ends, and the book along with it, the vocabulary developed over the course of the argument boils down into a focused version of my original question, what a philosopher appears to be. Thoreau imagines the philosopher leaving home in a shirt. It is nothing as images go; there are a dozen others like it in Thoreau alone. And yet, if the explorations in this book illuminate anything, they will bring a new glow to what a shirt can be, why leaving town might be the place for a philosopher, and how you can tell a philosopher in the first place.

Notes

- 1 Wolff (2007) retells this anecdote with witty commentary.
- 2 Parm. B8: pistios ischus, l. 12; dikê, l. 14; from Simpl. in Phys. 145.
- 3 Her. B50: ouk emou, alla tou logou akousanta homologein sophon estin hen panta einai "It is wise to agree, listening not to me but to my logos, that all is one"; quoted in Hippol. 9.9.
- 4 Her. B40: "Polymathy does not teach [didaskei] one to have intelligence [noon = nous]; for otherwise it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and also Xenophanes and Hecataeus"; in Diog. Laert. 9.1.
- 5 Her. B93: "The king [anax] whose oracle it is at Delphi neither speaks, theorizes, argues [legei] nor conceals, hides [kruptei] but signifies, means, signals [sêmainei]"; in Plut. De Pyth. 21.
- 6 Her. B107, in Sext. *Math.* 7.126; see also "not knowing either how to hear or how to speak," B6, in Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.5.
- 7 Her.: souls in Hades smell, B98, quoted in Plut. *De fac.* 28; we would *diagnoien* "discern" things by scent if they burned, B7, in Arist. *Sens.* 5 443a21; world is fire, B30, in Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.14; see also B90.
- 8 Arist. Metaph. 1.1 980a21.
- 9 Arist. Metaph. 1.2 982b14.
- 10 Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, §13.
- 11 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, Essay III, §§6–8.
- 12 Pl. *Ap.* 17d–e.
- 13 Wittgenstein 1958 [1953]: §32.
- 14 Pl.: Socrates as muôps stinging fly, Ap. 30e; motionless, Sym. 175a, 220c-d; philosophical ascent requiring leader, Sym. 210a-b. I am grateful to David Sider for pointing this last passage out to me.
- 15 Pl. Rep. 397e-398b.
- Recently the question has arisen whether what qualifies philosophers for rule is their psychological rightness (based on their having something better to do philosophically) or, rather, their knowledge about the good. See lately Kamtekar 2014. But I am not taking a side in this discussion, because I treat the philosophers' psychological rightness as a necessary condition for rule not sufficient. I would only caution that abandoning the psychological criterion altogether, in the hopes of making study of the good a philosophical project that leads naturally to good political rule, would make a mystery of the idea that philosophers be commanded back down into the cave, compelled to rule.

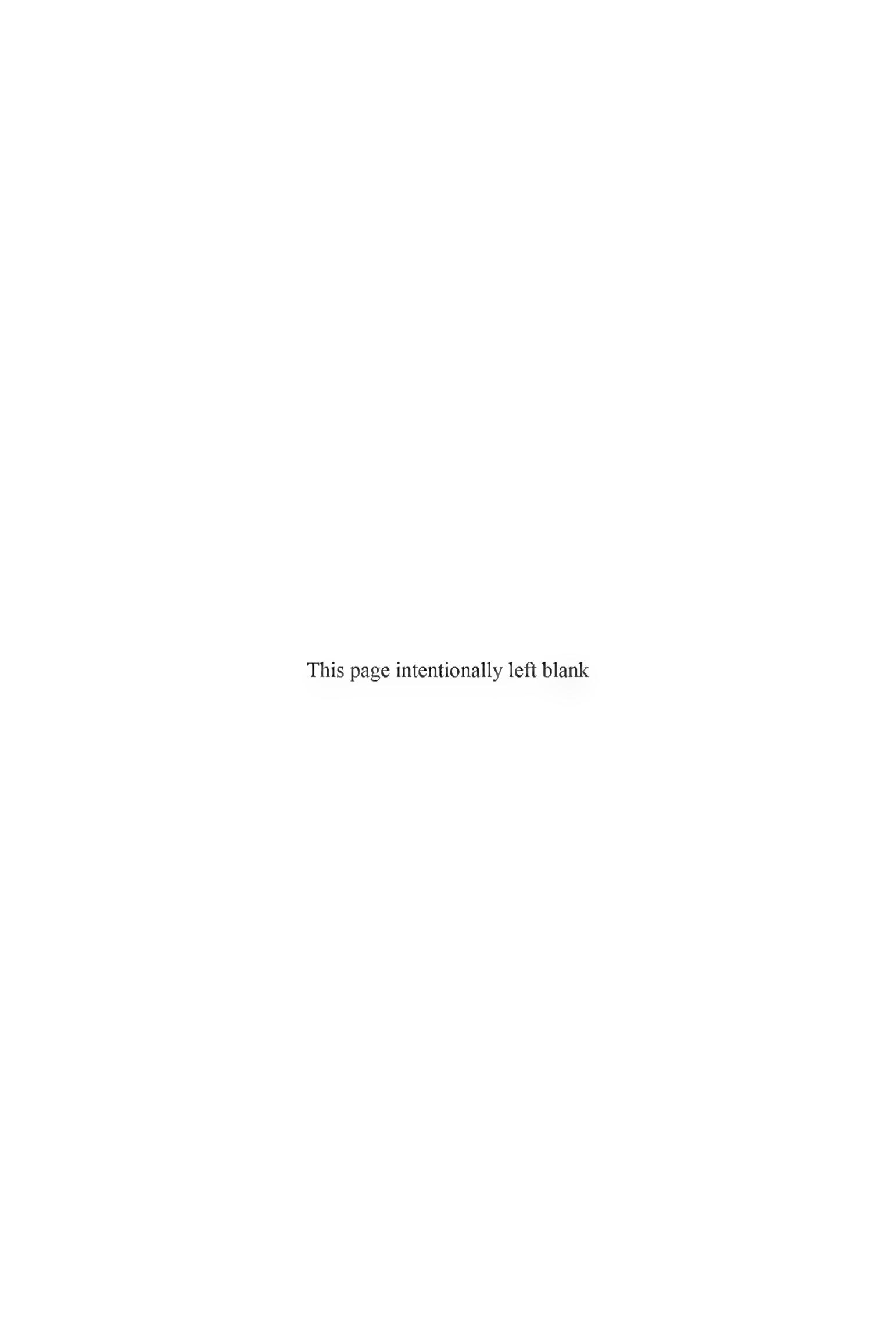
12 Introduction

- 17 Pl. Rep. 7: prisoners "like us," representing human beings as such, 515a; going back into cave, 516a, 519d; prisoners jeer and would execute philosopher, 517a.
- 18 Diog. Laert. 6.40.
- 19 Diog. Laert. 6.54.
- 20 Ael. VH 4.9.
- 21 Diog. Laert. 3.4–5. Diogenes cites Dicaearchus, student of Aristotle, as his source, which makes this an early attestation. Later sources claim Plato's participation at one or another of all the pan-Hellenic games. In all cases he is said to have wrestled, and the Isthmian Games are the most likely big competition he participated in. See Riginos 1976: 41–42.
- 22 Diog. Laert.: Diogenes contra Dioxippus, 6.43; few humans, 6.60.
- Vanity: Nietzsche calls an atavism, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §261; on this passage see Pappas 2005: 248; mutual accusations between Plato and Diogenes, Diog. Laert. 6.26.
- 24 For the surviving evidence about Socratics see the splendid recent sourcebook Rowe and Boys-Stones 2013.

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Part I Socrates in the Theaetetus



1 Entering the Theaetetus

Maurice Drury recalls Wittgenstein's giving him a translation of Plato's *Theaetetus* to read. Drury told Wittgenstein he found the dialogue "cold," to which Wittgenstein answered "It was far from cold when it was written." ¹

And yet today the body of the *Theaetetus* has grown cold to the touch. Philosophers who examine knowledge rarely approach the subject as Plato did. Or it rarely strikes them, as Wittgenstein reported being struck, that someone today wondering how to understand knowledge resembles the characters in this arcane and off-putting dialogue. Wittgenstein's reply to Drury attests to the talent he had, maybe the sharpest of his many philosophical senses, for discovering the metaphysical impulse motivating abstract texts. However chilled they are now into systems, and described in technical jargon, these works began in the heated effort to grasp something impossible, or to grasp it impossibly.

For those readers who continue not to be warmed by Plato's *Theaetetus* even after contemplating the philosophical impulses that drive it, there may be other paths that lead back toward the world that produced the dialogue. This is not a book about the *Theaetetus*, but it will dwell on the first half of the dialogue for a while, in the hopes of recovering part of the motive force behind it. For this dialogue contains, as I believe no other work of Plato's does, signs and remnants of Plato's movement toward the institutionalization of philosophy. And reading for those signs may help some modern light fall on obscure turns of this conversation.

I will be saying that the first half of the *Theaetetus* bears the marks of the Academy's founding, and that the founding of the Academy creates the possibility of a philosopher at home in a school. Such a philosopher is a teacher but also a citizen of his homeland. Usually pictured as male, he is an exemplar of that free man's virtue *sôphrosunê* "moderation, temperance, self-control."

Because Socrates was not normally depicted as at all aristocratic, sometimes not even presentable among the prosperous, elite citizens of Athens, this new philosophical type that the *Theaetetus* introduces to its readers will leave us wondering where Socrates belongs in the new world of philosophical schools. He is something of a wonder, and Plato must have known that Socrates would persist as a model for philosophers. But what would this new type be or look like if not like Socrates? Does philosophy have two models of its practitioners now?

It will take some time, and turns of interpretation, to find the rival images of philosophers speaking out from the pages of the *Theaetetus*. This chapter begins that interpretation and the next two will carry it forward. Part I as a whole will leave us with sharper images of the philosopher – the reality of the philosopher, but also that less-studied adjunct to this reality the philosophical appearance: what you might have to look like to resemble a philosopher. In pursuit of this appearance we will enter into the *Theaetetus* but also pass through it, to locate the question of the philosopher among discussions of dress and fashion.

Plato's Academy

There is no doubt about the existence of schools in Athens, but considerable uncertainty about what they were like. Several schools appeared during the century after Athens executed Socrates: the Academy, the Lyceum, the Stoa, and Epicurus's Garden, together with others not as formally organized or not as long lasting. It is clear that Plato's Academy came first and that it took its name from the gymnasium known as the Academy, but too many more general claims about the institution are up for debate. Did the school exist on the grounds of the gymnasium, or was it nearby, with members of the Academy using the gymnasium as a place to convene? Did the school have some traditionally recognized religious status when Plato founded it?

It does seem that as a public institution an Athenian gymnasium itself could not have been purchased. By the time of Socrates, Athens had three main gymnasia open and regularly attended, the Academy, Lyceum, and Cynosarges. It is telling that all three came to be associated with philosophical schools. Besides the Platonists meeting at the Academy, there were the students of Aristotle at the Lyceum. According to one explanation of the Cynics' name, it derived from their meeting at the Cynosarges, a gymnasium open to illegitimate children and (perhaps) non-citizens.²

This last association however is less clear than the others. The Cynics might have simply called themselves *kunikoi* "doglike." The next chapter will explore another possible origin for their name.

A palaistra was a smaller place focused on wrestling and usually reserved for use by younger men. It could be privately owned, and new ones would appear from time to time. The gymnasia were larger and treated as permanent institutions. They stood outside the city walls, and although they mostly consisted of open space they were enclosed within walls of their own. The architecture inside those walls included dressing rooms and meeting rooms, and a covered walk-way around the central space, a colonnade known as the *peripatos* (from which, at the Lyceum, Aristotle's associates would come to be known as Peripatetics, no doubt because they used the colonnade as their main meeting place).³

The open space of the gymnasium must have been considerable. Writing around the middle of the fourth century, when Plato's Academy had been operating for a few decades and Aristotle had not yet founded his school at the Lyceum, Xenophon refers to both of those gymnasia as locations for cavalry

exhibitions. The cavalry commander, Xenophon says, is responsible for leading all the displays that the city requires the cavalry to put on, "those both in the Academy and in the Lyceum."⁴

Given the mildness of Greek weather, and given that this was the world before modern technology, most of the exercising would have taken place in the open air. So a gymnasium looked more like a garden or park than like a big building. The Academy's philosophers could have walked along those colonnades, or sat inside meeting rooms. Just as easily they could have wandered the grounds where young and old men sprinted, threw javelins, lifted dumbbells, or wrestled.⁵

Trying to say more about what the philosophers did leads to another thicket of questions, this time about the Academy's membership. How many people belonged to the Academy at any one time? Did they stay for life, or for a specified period? Aristotle famously arrived at the Academy when he was seventeen, and was still there twenty years later when Plato died. Did the typical Academician stay as long as that?

If long times at the Academy were common, one obvious next question is how formally the school distinguished its students from its teachers. Even Aristotle did not arrive at seventeen to join the Academy's faculty; but just as surely he was not being called a student twenty years later.

Philosophical schools neither created education in Athens nor replaced earlier schools, but rather became one kind of supplement to existing schools. In Athens, young children studied in groups (depending on what their parents could afford, and for how long), using Homer or another traditional poet to learn how to read and write; in the process they familiarized themselves with a fair quantity of poetry. Socrates describes *mimêsis* in the *Republic* using the first episode of the *Iliad*, quite possibly so that even the poorest students will know what it says. (When Tom Sawyer has to memorize Bible verses he is tempted to stick with "Jesus wept." The passage from *Iliad* 1 is the "Jesus wept" of Homer.)

This training in literacy provided the rudiments of intellectual ability. Basic literacy was probably widespread among adult citizens, who needed to deal with written material as legislators and members of the *boulê* "council, executive committee" of Athens. And a recurring scene from Athenian tragedy, of an illiterate man describing letters he does not understand, implies that the audience recognizes the word being spelled out as this messenger is unable to.⁷ But this much gives only the beginnings of literacy. As William Harris has concluded, "the majority of free Greeks did not go to school for any substantial period." The boys who moved on to skilled professions would learn their trades as apprentices, and presumably farmers' sons simply worked alongside their fathers.

By the time that Socrates was an adult, around the middle of the fifth century BC, sophists had come to Athens to fill the vacuum in higher education. Although some sophists offered instruction in just about every subject — Hippias is the most famous example of the sophistical polymath — the prosperous young men in Athens soon made clear that what they really wanted to learn was skill at public speaking and at refuting anything an opponent might say. They

wanted to prevail among the crowds at the Athenian assembly, or in court where jurors could number in the hundreds. So rhetoric and eristic (or dialectic) – probably mixed together with samples of grammar, history, and natural science – made up the sophists' curriculum. The *Clouds* of Aristophanes, the earliest reference to Socrates surviving from any writer, depicts him as the head of a *phrontistêrion* "intellectuary, thinkery," in which lessons on outsmarting creditors combine with wordplay, materialist ethics, and zoology. Aristophanes probably had no knowledge of the real Socrates, and anyway wanted to amuse the crowd more than to portray a contemporary, so *Clouds* does not make reliable evidence about Socrates. Nevertheless the elements of this stage school likely derive from what had begun to take place around Athens.

One other feature of sophistry emerges from an anecdote about Prodicus. Socrates speaks of having attended the cheap public lecture that Prodicus gave, though he could not afford the cost of a full course of study. If Prodicus resembles other sophists, their activity must have included both lectures and tutorials. The lecture had to contain a few nuggets, or it wouldn't make much of an advertisement for the expensive private course, but Prodicus saved the real doctrines for his paying customers; and in general every student learned in the sophist's classroom what was not available to the public.⁹

Most famously the sophists charged money for their services. The protagonist of *Clouds* pays for a Socratic education, but this says more about the general public awareness of sophistic practice than it does about Socrates, who by all other accounts conversed without charging a fee.

The difference between charging tuition and free philosophizing let Plato distinguish philosophy from sophistry; in other ways too the first philosophical schools would have made the sophists their foils; but separating a philosopher from a sophist would draw attention to similarities as well as oppositions. Here it is worth pausing over the strange result of Plato's one sustained effort to define the sophist, in the conversation that all but fills his dialogue the *Sophist*. Sometimes the definitions given there make the sophist sound like a philosopher. One in particular is still allegedly the account of a sophist, but the sophist's definition describes the pedagogical values of philosophical cross-examination. Other dialogues illustrate the same trickiness of telling the two kinds of clever men apart. Socrates and Protagoras almost merge, in the dialogue named after Protagoras, deploying similar techniques to one another and finally swapping views on the teaching of virtue. And Jacques Derrida has shown that in Plato's *Phaedrus*, the word *pharmakon* "medicine, poison" that Socrates uses to tell philosopher and sophist apart applies duplicitously to both. 11

Institutionally speaking, the philosophical schools acted contrary to sophistic schools in not charging tuition, but seem to have followed the sophists' lead in combining certain subjects in their curriculum and excluding others. Anecdotes speak of geometrical and astronomical research at the Academy, while the empirically minded Lyceum maintained supplies of plant and animal samples. It does not appear that any philosophical school offered instruction in rhetoric, as did the school of Isocrates, intellectual heir to the sophist Gorgias. In this

respect we are left saying that philosophy resembled sophistry to the point of choosing some areas of focus or other, not necessarily in the areas chosen.

In more formal respects the Academy seems to have tried to supplant rather than to oppose the sophists' schools. That is to say that the Academy behaved as known institutions did, offering itself as a replacement for the sophists, rather than rejecting their entire approach to teaching. Some evidence survives, intriguing if not always trustworthy, according to which Plato gave some public lectures, ¹⁴ apparently as a contrast to the more intimate instruction that went on within the school. In any case the Academy must have combined introductory instruction in philosophy and occasional popular lectures with colloquies among its advanced thinkers. ¹⁵

Beyond lectures, a very old tradition holds that Plato imparted some teachings to members of the Academy that he did not divulge to the larger public, not even in his writings. The possibility of an "unwritten doctrine" or esoteric teaching has inspired a long-lasting debate. 16 A variety of sources agree that Plato taught certain things to his students that diverge from the contents of his dialogues; most notably, Aristotle mounts a critique of Platonic principles that are hard to identify in Plato's own extant writings. 17 Saying this leaves us a long way from knowing what those esoteric teachings were, but it does suggest that the Academy exercised some vigilance over who could hear the central tenets of the Platonic philosophy, and in what form. There were students, in other words, participants who did something more than stop by to hear what the philosophers were talking about, but who probably participated to a lesser extent than the Academy's luminaries did. These were students as opposed to casual auditors but also students as opposed to teachers. For all the differences between philosophy and sophistry, this core element of schooling is common to the two kinds of institution. Students became insiders, privy to a privileged instruction that merely curious outsiders can only guess at.

The students of long duration could move to become peers of the school's intellectuals. First among them was the "scholarch," head of the school. After Plato had died and other schools came into existence around Athens, the position of scholarch evolved into something official, with the members of a school voting to choose their next leader. But administrative structure cannot be attributed to the Academy in its early days, while Plato lived. On his deathbed he appointed Speusippus the next scholarch to succeed him; and however sharply later incarnations of the Academy were identified with their scholarch, the Academy as Plato himself knew it was still innocent of such hierarchical organization.

Some ancient evidence suggests that philosophical practice at the early Academy somewhat resembled what Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger do in many Platonic dialogues, which is to seek definitions. There is the story, already mentioned in the Introduction, about the Academy's defining the human as featherless biped only to receive the counterexample of a plucked chicken from Diogenes. Despite this objection, according to the anecdote, the Academy went on defining the human, only adding a differentia to their definition: "with broad, flat nails." ¹⁸

Known as the most colorful Cynic and as one of the first, Diogenes may have lived during Plato's later years, to judge by the number of anecdotes that mention him and Plato together and the absence of stories about him and Socrates. So his presence in this anecdote, if it is reliable, dates the development of definitions to the earliest period of the Academy. And definitions had the structure of genus and differentiae, with additional criteria narrowing down a larger group. The anecdote also hints at the circumstances under which teaching took place in the Academy: a specific area for instruction, and maybe fixed lectures for the collected students. But it would be irresponsible to claim very much along these lines.

The other piece of evidence is an accidentally preserved bit from a comedy that dates to fourth-century Athens. The comedy, written by Epicrates, has been lost; the bit turns up in a work from several centuries later, *Deipnosophistai* "Intellectuals at Dinner," by Athenaeus. ¹⁹ The characters at the fictional dinner party told of in this long work, written during the early Roman Empire, debate the names that had been used four or five centuries earlier in classical Athens for (among other things) fruits and vegetables. The name of the *kolokunth* "gourd, pumpkin" comes up, and one clever diner reports this scene from Epicrates, in which Plato supervises younger members of the Academy as they try to define that very fruit. The definition fails and Plato encourages the others to keep plugging away at the pumpkin.

The scene is meant to amuse. In Neil Simon's play *The Sunshine Boys* the aging comic Willie tells his nephew "Words with a 'k' are funny. Pickle is funny," etc.²⁰ And in ancient Attica *kolokunth* would have been funny too. (Willie also says, apropos Diogenes, "Chicken is funny.") But that only shows that the reality of Plato's Academy has been made into a joke. Maybe Epicrates tweaked the facts for laughs by writing "pumpkin" when the students had been defining olives; olives are not funny; but for the scene to have had any point the students must have been defining concepts, and quite possibly species of plants and animals.

Even if we could count on this evidence it would not settle the question of Plato's teaching. In the story that includes Diogenes, Plato seems to have led the Academy to its definitions, so that Diogenes scored a point against the great man himself with his chicken, while the scene from Epicrates finds Plato merely overseeing students in their efforts to define. To those cracking jokes about Plato it doesn't seem to matter whether he came up with the definitions himself. It is telling that neither story describes Plato cross-examining someone who holds false ideas about the concept being investigated. Has the elenchus or cross-examination disappeared from philosophical activity, after it featured so prominently in the philosophizing that Socrates did, very much including the Socratic philosophy into a more positive practice after Socrates died? It can be hard to square the abrasive purgation that is Socratic elenchus with an educational institution devoted to building the student's knowledge. But then we might ask what place there will be for Socrates in the Academy. One reason that outsiders

today are put off by the disputatious manner of much American philosophy is not that the culture demands agreeability — look at the victorious styles in political debates — but that it expects the academic preserve to follow gentler principles than politics does, or than business does. The great problems of survival and freedom have been solved within that preserve, so why the savagery?

The Academy in Plato's Theaetetus

If the *Theaetetus* does reflect the Academy's existence as I believe it to, a relationship between the school and the dialogue will not be the kind of fact to be proved by means of a single clue. A cluster of subjects broached in the *Theaetetus* points toward the problem of philosophical teaching, philosophical tradition, and associations among philosophers, as no other dialogue does. These marks left on the dialogue by Academic reality are not meant to show only that the *Theaetetus* comes into existence after the school's founding, but also something more ambitious than that, and concerned with the nature of philosophical ambition: something worth being called by a name that seems anachronistic at first, the problem of – the first fore appearance of – *the professional philosopher*.

If we possessed more information, the immediate link between this dialogue and the Academy would come in the person of Theaetetus himself, given that some authors treat him as a colleague of Plato's at the Academy. Very few of the other characters appearing in the dialogues also studied or taught at the Academy. Add in one detail claimed by an ancient source, and this dialogue begins to look like the biographical backstory about a prized associate; for an anonymous marginal note to Book 13 of Euclid's *Elements* says Theaetetus added the octahedron and icosahedron to the list of regular polyhedra discovered by the Pythagoreans, producing the complete set of five of interest to Plato (now known as "Platonic solids"). So Theaetetus studies geometry, then meets Socrates and wants to imbed the geometry he knows within larger philosophical questions; thus the talented mathematician who worked alongside Plato received his imprimatur from Socrates himself. The dialogue would then play the specific role of supplying credentials, a kind of apostolic succession, to a member of Plato's original faculty.

Such a story about Theaetetus and Socrates would be moving if it could be true. But the sources that place Theaetetus at Plato's side are not credible enough to make the story reliable. The Byzantine reference work known as the *Suda* makes him Plato's pupil. But besides its general reputation for compiling fact and allegation, the *Suda* also complicates things by speaking of two different men named Theaetetus. The soundest relevant evidence comes from Proclus, one of the last Platonists in Athens in a Christian era, whose commentary on Euclid recounts a history of the subject that faithfully assigns special significance to Plato. "The first mathematicians of Plato's time mentioned here are Leodamas ... Archytas, and Theaetetus." As Leonid Zhmud points out, nothing in this list proves that Theaetetus was a friend of Plato's, even that he functioned as a teacher or a researcher at the Academy. But it does set him in

a Platonic context and practicing mathematics, a modest historical claim we can trust that puts Theaetetus one way or other close to the Academy.

As far as that goes the dialogue's setting in a gymnasium is a nice touch. Other dialogues take place at gymnasia or wrestling rooms too, but they are the shorter dialogues that seem concerned to describe Socrates historically (*Charmides*, *Euthydemus*, *Lysis*). This fact both inclines those dialogues to be reports about Socrates, therefore placing him in a gymnasium, for all we know, simply because the conversation had in fact occurred in a gymnasium. The likely early date for those short dialogues might also mean that they were written before the founding of the Academy, when their settings could not have alluded to a school that didn't yet exist.

The Theaetetus however must have been written after the founding of the Academy, almost regardless of difficulties in assigning dates to the Platonic dialogues. (But see below on this dialogue's date of composition.) In that case the setting at an unnamed gymnasium is a nod that an earlier dialogue's similar setting would not have been to the then-future entity we call Plato's Academy. There is an irony to Theaetetus and Socrates standing together speaking of geometry and philosophy on the very spot where Theaetetus will stand with Plato twenty years later – if this is the same spot. Theaetetus has oiled himself in the outer dromos "track," 24 and the later references in this dialogue to wrestling reinforce the setting, but no one calls the gymnasium by name. (Compare the Euthydemus, which speaks of that dialogue's conversation set at the Lyceum, the Lysis which finds Socrates walking from Academy toward Lyceum and then entering a new palaistra, and the Charmides set at the wrestling school of Taurus.²⁵) Has Plato grown wary of identifying the place now that it has also come to be the name of his school? But that is speculation. This dialogue's evocation of the Academy will have to emerge more obliquely.

One sign to focus on is the role and significance of Socrates. For this point, though without entering full-scale debates over the chronology of the dialogues, I need a few minimal claims about when the *Theaetetus* was written. First of all it should have been written after the founding of the Academy. This proposal is hardly controversial, because the traditional date for the Academy, 387, is rarely challenged, while the complete *Theaetetus* is placed relatively late in the Platonic corpus even by those who challenge the traditional ordering of the dialogues. Sometime around 370 Plato wrote this dialogue, which means that his school had been running for a decade or more already.

That first claim is modest but not even that much has to be true. For the *Theaetetus* to reflect the founding of the Academy, it suffices that it contemplate such an event not necessarily that it comment on a fait accompli. Plato can be proposing a school of philosophy rather than assessing a school that already exists, and not much in my reading will change.

The second chronological claim can be put in either strong or weak terms. After the *Theaetetus* Plato wrote those dialogues in which someone other than Socrates leads the conversation; or (the claim in its strong form) Plato wrote such dialogues *and no others* after he wrote the *Theaetetus*.

In the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, which are written as explicit sequels to the *Theaetetus*, Socrates is present, but a Stranger from Elea leads the discussion. The *Timaeus* and *Critias*, written as sequels to the *Republic* (or as if they were its sequels), are mainly monologues by the speakers they are named after. The *Laws* has no Socrates in it at all, and an Athenian Stranger leads. And on every chronology of the dialogues I have seen, these works come after the *Theaetetus*. No dialogue that has someone else as its main speaker appeared before the *Theaetetus*.

The interesting question is what else might come after the *Theaetetus*. Traditional chronologies also put the *Philebus* into this last group, although some scholars argue that it belongs earlier.²⁷ Even including the *Philebus*, the historical claim remains a substantial one. More far-reaching challenges to the old chronology also put the *Phaedrus* after the *Theaetetus*,²⁸ or – astonishingly to most Platonists – even the *Republic*.²⁹ This last is the minority view. It is close to a consensus that either all dialogues after the *Theaetetus* are dominated by someone other than Socrates, or all but a few. One can defend a fairly strong form of this chronological claim.³⁰

If he is soon to disappear from dominance in Plato's works, Socrates shows no sign of the fact, except for his mentions of having to go hear the indictment against him, and the start of the legal process that Plato's readers know will end with Socrates' death. Socrates controls this conversation; sets the questions and decides which answers are worthy; digresses at length although no other participant does. The *Theaetetus* is more about Socrates than about Theaetetus. And what it is about insofar as it is about Socrates is whatever quality of his philosophizing has rendered him incapable of henceforth leading others into philosophy. This is to say that the *Theaetetus* may provide the demonstration of why Socrates can no longer serve as the philosophical teacher Plato requires for his remaining dialogues. This dialogue may explain what characteristics of Socrates keep him from leading other dialogues.

(The fact that Socrates will soon go to trial and die is not enough grounds for saying that Plato is now spiriting him out of the dialogues. By all accounts Plato wrote the *Phaedo* – the dialogue in which Socrates actually dies – before writing many other dialogues. But one might speculate that the *Theaetetus* returned to the legal case to treat it from a new perspective. Earlier Plato wanted to pay tribute to the death of Socrates and acknowledge his disappearance from the world. This time round Socrates is disappearing from philosophy.)

One thing that "Socrates" means for Plato is the problematization of what has thus far been known as teaching. Socrates denies that he teaches, for after all he knows nothing. Young men keep company with him, but Socrates distinguishes anything they might learn in the process from an education he could be said to supply.

In the *Theaetetus* Socrates continues to interrogate and examine as he had in other dialogues, and as he'd done famously in those short works that earned him his reputation as skeptic and critic (*Charmides*, *Hippias Minor*, *Laches*, etc.). But in the *Theaetetus* he does not refuse the title "teacher," and he even casts

his elenchtic practice, his cross-examinations, as an accompaniment to formal education. Moreover Socrates speaks of formal schooling more respectfully here than in other dialogues. Protagoras is his main target during the first half of this dialogue, but Socrates goes after the relativism Protagoras espoused without belitting Protagoras's status as teacher. (Compare the *Theaetetus* to Plato's *Protagoras* and you will see how much more sparing the attack is here.) The unanswerable chaos, and the opponent that deserves no quarter, is the philosophy that takes place outside of all schooling, a state in which no one admits to having been taught. The *Theaetetus* will locate this chaos in Ephesus.

Schools for philosophy can imply a philosophical tradition, and they seem to do so in the *Theaetetus*. Teachers were students once, and every school's founder must have been schooled somewhere. In another departure from the Socrates who typically speaks as a lone thinker, scarcely aware of earlier philosophy and more often than not dismissive of it, this dialogue's Socrates for the first time sketches a history of philosophy. Philosophers have thought and acted in teams, or armies, and evidently that is as it should be. One philosophizes not by spontaneous creative act that lets philosophy begin afresh — or more correctly: not *only* in that manner — but also through an entry into the philosophies that already exist, and by means of a process you might call adjudicating among predecessors.

A new ambivalence toward Socratic philosophy; the acceptance of philosophy as tradition; an acknowledgment that philosophy calls for teaching – all reflect a movement toward institutions and the institutional, what you could call a movement that carries philosophy from the agora where Socrates could be found to the Academy that Plato founded. Old mythic histories from many cultures portray such a transition in tales of a pair of founding kings, the first one wild and charismatic but the second one the administrator who shapes the old rebellion into a new status quo. We find Numa Pompilius following Romulus in Rome, Solomon after David in Israel.³¹ Some transformation of this kind does take place in the *Theaetetus*, which begins to replace the irresistible charisma with a philosophy that is organized and governed. The establishment of a school in the real world would explain such a change within the dialogues. In fact nothing else could explain it; for there would be no point in advocating a new approach to philosophy unless someone were actually practicing such a thing.

The reason behind a double foundation for the Academy, a charismatic Socratic prefounding followed by Plato's administrative establishment, is the same as the reason for legends of two first kings. The one who is wondrous enough to inspire the new nation or school can't be contained or governed within it. The person without whom the institution cannot be imagined is unimaginable within the institution. The second founder who follows the first can make the great new idea an establishment but cannot have inspired it.

The point of associating a dialogue with the founding of the Academy is not to dig for clues about what Plato was doing with his time while writing any given dialogue (engages in politics, writes about political engagement; dislikes a painting, writes condemnation of painting; founds a school, writes in praise of scholars). The point is rather that the *Theaetetus* represents one kind of

testimony to how antiquity experienced the institutionalization of Socratic philosophy. It is the mark left by an event that modernity will experience as a crisis, in one way with the rise of the philosopher/professor (Kant, Hegel), in another way after the age of rebels against the professional philosophy professor, which is to say the end of the age of Marx and Nietzsche, Mill and Wittgenstein, and the subsequent reorganization of modern universities.

If modernity experiences the status of the philosopher as a crisis – does philosophy really exist, or exist officially, within an institution, or does it exist at its best outside university stultifications? – that does not mean that ancient philosophers felt the same threat when they contemplated who the philosopher is and where philosophers live. It also does not mean the two experiences are entirely different. Instead we need to ask in what particulars, and at which points, the modern crisis over philosophy's established existence resembles concerns voiced in antiquity, and where the two ages diverge. Antiquity does not have to have been a homunculus of modernity, a miniature version of the present primed to grow into today's world, in order for it to contain practices recognizable among our own marriage, warfare, and legislation. Athenian marriage differed from today's marriages in many ways, and love stories told in Plato's youth did not end in happy marriages. Nevertheless a worry did exist about coordinating love with marriage, which only dogmatic anti-anachronisticism could fail to see, and that speaks to modern anxieties enough to suggest that love's place in marriage is something more than an accident of economy and law as those exist now. As far as the philosopher's place in the academy goes, it can only ruin the investigation to decide before beginning that ancient and modern concerns must be different. Let the differences emerge as we look into the details; let's not let a presumption of differences keep the details from emerging.

Beginning around Chapter 3, this book's reading of the *Theaetetus* will open into a question about philosophy that leaves the *Theaetetus* behind, just when we have arrived at the center of that dialogue. The Theaetetus inspires the topic of philosophical dress, but that topic needs more than one or two philosophical texts to motivate it. I will have to hope for my readers' patience in two ways, as the argument ventures away from the *Theaetetus* into other philosophies, and also from philosophy to a bit of social history; but I'll also be hoping for the patience of readers who start out wary of anachronism. The goal of this development in the argument, a development constituting Part II of this book, is the same worry that philosophical schools also arouse. Does the philosopher exist officially, institutionally, by means of some identifying mark and badge; and how could the philosopher have such a marked existence, when philosophy announced itself to be everyone's property and the activity that everyone does, which is to say the way of thinking for which one needs to be no one in particular?

The frame of the Theaetetus

It is premature to describe the argument's movement beyond the *Theaetetus* when just now it is time to make a first move into it; on this occasion doing so

by watching how Plato moves into and toward the conversation between the student Theaetetus, his teacher Theodorus, and the man Plato casts in this dialogue as something like a teacher, or someone between the student and his teacher.

The *Theaetetus* begins as many Platonic dialogues do, with a frame. The dialogues that are framed open with a conversation that asks for or inspires the report about an earlier conversation. The dialogues may close with the same framing conversation, but not always. Typically the frames introduce Plato's longer and more complex works, although a dialogue may have the complexity of the *Phaedrus* but no introductory frame, and Plato's two longest works the *Republic* and *Laws* begin without a frame of any kind. Those cases aside, some of the most widely read dialogues – *Phaedo*, *Protagoras*, *Symposium*, *Timaeus* – start in an introductory dialogue in which one party is invited to speak further, whether delivering a monologue or recounting an earlier philosophical conversation.

Eucleides and Terpsion are speaking in the opening frame of the *Theaetetus*. They have just run into each other, for Eucleides says in what are the dialogue's first words arti, ô Terpsiôn, ê palai ex agrou "Did you come from the countryside just now, Terpsion, or earlier?" The two are evidently in a city and meeting up.

Translating the sentence as I just did makes for natural English, but at the cost of departing from the Greek word order, which literally goes "Just now, Terpsion, or earlier, from the countryside?" This English is clunky, partly because there is no verb in the original, and English does not communicate with unstated verbs as often as ancient Greek does. But the literal translation usefully draws attention to the *arti* that kicks off the dialogue, a word that by Plato's time meant "now" or "just now," "just this minute."³²

The opening words in a Platonic dialogue frequently alert the reader to significant remarks coming later.³³ This *arti* looks ahead to the *Theaetetus*'s treatment of knowledge and perception, and the changeability in nature that limits what you know to what you saw just now. Also notice the nearby words *thaumazô* "to wonder" and *agora* "marketplace, town square," that will come up again in the dialogue's portrayal of the philosopher as someone who wonders but does not go to the agora.³⁴

The initial *arti* comments on the philosopher's nature too, inasmuch as philosophers too can be evanescent. Eucleides saw Theaetetus just now. The man was near death and traveling back to Athens. He was alive just now, but who knows how long he will continue to be. And the Battle of Corinth just now ended. There were two such battles, one in 397 and the next in 369, and the text probably refers to the later of the two, fought when Theaetetus would have been forty-six years old. (This is one reason for believing the dialogue was finished in or after 369.) This makes thirty years since the death of Socrates, and Eucleides and Terpsion recall that Theaetetus had had a long formative talk with Socrates just before Socrates' indictment.

But "just now" and the disappearance of philosophers also figures into a formal peculiarity of the *Theaetetus*, which narratologically occupies a subgenre of Platonic dialogues that has no other members. The dialogues are either told

in narrated style, with Socrates or someone else reporting a conversation; or are presented as literal dialogues, containing the parts that each speaker says and nothing else (in particular no "and then he said" or "he agreed"). And they may or may not be framed, with a section that introduces the main conversation. The introductory frame in turn may be presented either as dialogue, in the style of a play, or as narration. And naturally enough, in a framed Platonic work the main dialogue contained within the frame is presented as narration. These dialogues begin with someone remembering an older conversation, or delivering a theory.

The exception to this rule about framing is the *Theaetetus*, whose opening dialogue sets up the presentation of the philosophical conversation within it, also a dialogue. For unlike the narrators in those other framed dialogues, Eucleides does not report from memory about this old conversation between Socrates and Theaetetus. He has compiled a written record of that conversation from what Socrates himself told him, and now he and Terpsion will sit down to rest while a slave reads them the result.³⁵ The remainder of the *Theaetetus* is nothing other than what the slave reads, what Eucleides has written out and kept, which makes this the unique work of Plato's in which the characters own and read a work about Socrates philosophizing.

This Platonic dialogue contains the text of a dialogue within its dramatic action. Thus it portrays a world that contains such dialogue texts.

A plausible argument has been made that Plato wrote the Theaetetus over a number of years, the opening conversation between Eucleides and Terpsion having been composed after the main work and prefixed to it. More than that, Holger Thesleff argues – with agreement and stylometric support from Harold Tarrant - that the internal dialogue began as a conversation narrated by Socrates, before Plato recast it in dialogue form.³⁶ Eucleides speaks of having transformed a narrative report into dialogue by leaving out every "I said" and "He agreed," and on this view Plato transformed the dialogue in just the same way. Thus Plato lets his fellow Socratic enact his own compositional work. (Eucleides came to be known as the founder of the Megarian school of philosophy. He wrote Socratic dialogues, including ones titled Crito and Alcibiades. 31) For the language of the Theaetetus, according to Tarrant's highly precise computer analysis of word frequency, bears the marks of having once been a narration.

The Republic distinguishes between narration that reports the sayings and doings of characters and mimêsis that has the characters speak.³⁸ And one might be tempted to interpret the revision of the Theaetetus along these lines, that it began as what the Republic calls diêgêsis "narration" and turned into mimêsis. But this association would miss an elementary point. In the Republic's terms Plato is writing mimetically either way, insofar as neither version of the *Theaetetus* – nor any version of any dialogue - gives us Plato speaking in propria persona. This is not why Plato's revision matters, for the reason that it illustrates another dialogue's distinction. The revision emphasizes what is already true enough and clear enough if the argument about revision fails, namely that Plato shaped the Theaetetus into a self-consciously written work.

An old tradition claims that right after the death of Socrates Plato went to Megara, where Eucleides was his host. Tarrant says, and he is surely right, "This must have been a period when Socratics tried in earnest to remember some of the conversations that Socrates had participated in." The most plausible behavior for survivors after a charismatic teacher's death is to memorialize the person. If, as the evidence suggests, the *Theaetetus* reached its present form thirty years after the death of Socrates, then the framing dialogue reflects not a fresh attempt at keeping Socrates alive in his friends' memories but a long-view reflection on his being gone, well in the past.

And yet we should not jump to the conclusion that this framing dialogue functions as the frames of Plato's other works do, and as narrative frames often do, to distance the reader from the events being spoken of, to damp emotions and blur the details of what anyone might have said to anyone else.⁴¹ As a rule, the "as-told-to" character of a story-within-a-story does tend to move events further into the past: Plato frames the Parmenides, Symposium, and Phaedo so that they become old reports from unreliable memories. But something close to the opposite can be said of this example, that if it measures off a great distance in one direction there is another direction along which it denies that any distance exists. Eucleides and Terpsion are already far from Socrates, but as fellow Socratics they are on equal ground. They both have this same document they are listening to. And we, at a future distance they have not thought to imagine, possess the same document they do. When you read this dialogue within the Theaetetus you are taking it in exactly as Eucleides and Terpsion were, or are. You hear the words they hear rather than eavesdrop on what they remember. You do not hear of their experience, you share it - now, just now. In the world of this dialogue, Eucleides experiences Socratic philosophy by reading a dialogue.

This equality among followers of Socrates requires philosophy to exist in writing, no longer only in the talks with Socrates that belong firsthand to his intimates, secondhand to *their* intimates, and then diminishing until a distant future possessing only remains of memories. But now what it means to be a student of Socrates has changed. Now his students are those who have read about him.

Unlike the other narrative frames, this one catapults us into a world in which philosophers are people who write and read dialogues. It is a world of which Plato's dialogues had previously been innocent.

Enter Theaetetus

Now begins the dialogue being read aloud by the slave, with Socrates talking to Theodorus. He says that Cyrene does not interest him, not even the promising young Cyrenians studying geometry or philosophy. This man about to be charged with damaging Athens shows how attached he feels to his home city. So he hears Theodorus out about a brilliant Athenian student named Theaetetus.⁴²

Theaetetus enters, having oiled himself for exercise. Plato does not say so but he is naked. Men at the gymnasium stripped and rubbed oil over their bodies before exercising, and did not dress again until the workout was over. Socrates decides to examine Theaetetus, and does so by asking about learning. Learning means growing wiser, and the wisdom thanks to which you grow wise is fundamentally the same thing as knowledge; so what is knowledge?⁴³

The Socratic vocation of asking for definitions is so familiar that this example calls for a comment. This is not the usual cross-examination. Socrates has questioned young men in wrestling rooms before – Charmides and Lysis, in the dialogues named after them – but they had not come before him as students. Lysis, sitting with his good friend Menexenus, is quizzed about the nature of friendship, while because Charmides is said to possess the virtue of sôphrosunê "self-control," Socrates asks him to define that. These interrogations of the young already differ from the confrontations in which Socrates has to handle a proud man full of false opinions: a Euthyphro or Protagoras, a Callicles or Ion. The young are pliant and far from set in their ways. For Charmides and Lysis the goal of the questioning is their self-knowledge, that they know how to describe and understand themselves. Without being humbled as their pompous elders have to be, Lysis and Charmides are still receiving a kind of ethical instruction. (The souls of the young can be shaped with positive instruction and guidance. Misdirected older souls need sterner correction.)

Theaetetus is young as Lysis and Charmides had been, and a student. Theodorus praises him for his ability to learn and to remember; Socrates now examines him not in order to find out whether Theaetetus understands some trait that he possesses, but as a continuation of his education. Having taken in knowledge of such subjects as geometry, you ought to be ready to say what knowledge is. The question "What is knowledge?" has not been molded to fit the soul and virtues of Theaetetus, but applies to anyone engaged in a course of learning — which is to say that the question belongs in a *curriculum*, as part of the practices undertaken at a school. More than he has done with any other interlocutor, Socrates comes to Theaetetus with his question already formed.

The Socrates made famous by Plato's short dialogues, and some of Xenophon's, could start anywhere. And that is an inadequate formulation, first because "can start anywhere" makes Socratic cross-examination sound like an option available to Socrates and an arrow in his quiver, when in fact the questioning he carries out can't do otherwise but begin wherever the interlocutor is vulnerable to it. The cross-examinations start surprisingly and parasitically after something else was said, because they are intrusions by their nature.

"Starting anywhere" also suggests there is somewhere – in a state of complete knowledge – that the process comes to an end. You can learn to read perfectly well that way, starting with the most familiar letters and going on until you know the alphabet. But when Socrates delivers a refutation, it does not necessarily pan out into a survey of virtue as such or any other broader knowledge. His starts are not the kind guaranteed to lead to finishes.

"What is knowledge?" comes into this conversation more systematically and promises to lead to a systematic conclusion. Despite the dialogue's failure to reach a conclusion about knowledge, it is clear that an answer to Socrates' question would embrace all learning and apply to all philosophy. Theaetetus

has been introduced to philosophy, not wandering onto its grounds unexpectedly from some adjoining land, but walking through the front door as students do in an organized school.

Relevantly, Socrates begins his questioning with *smikron de ti aporô* "I'm perplexed by one little thing," and then again soon thereafter *aporô* "I am perplexed." The inconclusive short dialogues that people sometimes compare the *Theaetetus* to present discussions that end in a fresh *aporia* or perplexity; this conversation Socrates comes to with his *aporia* in place. "The *Theaetetus* does not begin by chance or just anywhere. "What is knowledge?" is a standing question, one in need of an answer regardless of Theaetetus's own situation and the condition of his soul. The talents that Theaetetus has may well let him make more progress toward an answer than other students do, but Socrates does not raise the question as one that Theaetetus in particular needs to address. This is what it means to call "What is knowledge?" a topic in a curriculum.

A question of curriculum might be at work in Socrates' opening remarks about Cyrene, if those remarks are in fact distinguishing not between cities, and the relative braininess of the cities' young men, but between schools of philosophy. A later tradition names ten "Socratic" schools that grew after the death of Socrates, and whether or not that number is true there is reliable evidence for the existence of most of those ten understood separately; and one of them is the Cyrenaic school, the one from Cyrene.⁴⁵

Reference to the city's name does not prove that Socrates is choosing sides, preferring Athenian-style Socratic philosophy to its rivals (though Plato would have had reasons for going back to put such a declaration in the master's mouth). But an allusion to the Cyrenaic school becomes more plausible in light of the role that Eucleides is playing in this dialogue: Eucleides started the Megarian school and appears in the *Theaetetus* as an author of Socratic dialogues. If one Socratic school of philosophy is being conjured up, why not others? More such references will come into the dialogue and cause this work depicting a conversation from 399, but written thirty years later, to speak of debates and discussants from the earlier time as stand-ins for philosophers of the later time. Thus the *Theaetetus* maintains a polite hands-off about Parmenidean philosophy, maybe because a Megarian is said to have transcribed this dialogue, and the Megarians with their sympathies toward Parmenides would not have cared to go through a critique of his arguments. The hands-off is not just about Socrates and Parmenides, but also about Plato portraying the school of Megara.

With similar anachronism, the epistemology of the Cyrenaic school appears to be at work in the philosophy that Socrates attacks as Protagorean relativism. No wonder the dialogue casts Theodorus that son of Cyrene as an ally of Protagoras. He would equally be an ally of his compatriots from Cyrene. And another Socratic group, the Cynic school that Diogenes of Sinope belonged to, will cut its own path into the discussion.

For now, as the *Theaetetus* opens, the name "Cyrene" is just a dismissal that serves to introduce Theaetetus, he being the good Athenian who towers above students from Cyrene. Soon enough the word should communicate more.

Socrates as midwife

Early in their quest for a definition of knowledge, Theaetetus confesses that this problem has long troubled him. Socrates diagnoses Theaetetus: pregnant with an idea. Luckily he has come across a midwife of the soul, in the person of Socrates, who specializes in bringing out the thoughts that people carry in them unarticulated; and in one of the most famous and memorable parts of this dialogue Socrates elaborates the metaphor.⁴⁶

This passage provides the crucial datum for a distinction between philosophical teaching, as the *Theaetetus* understands that activity, and whatever we call the activity associated with Socrates. That Socrates differs from the best or chief philosopher he will soon be saying himself,⁴⁷ but that could be Socratic modesty talking. Anyway that later passage dwells on the philosopher understood characterologically, more a person than a practitioner. Soon enough this book's question will be who the philosopher is. For now, and by way of glimpsing the *Theaetetus*'s conception of the Academy, it is attending to what a philosopher does, which according to the *Theaetetus* (and *only* according to this one dialogue) is more or less what midwives do.

The analogy spans two realms. As men are to women, so are souls to bodies, and the thoughts that come out of souls to the infants that come out of women's bodies. Among these emergent thoughts or assertions the true ones resemble healthy infants, while illusory insights resemble the sick or deformed new child in need of being exposed.

What a midwife does in the lady's bodily domain, Socrates does among gentlemen and their souls. He makes matches between men and teachers that will maximize their intellectual fertility. He detects pregnancy where the untrained eye sees nothing out of the ordinary. He has the know-how needed to ease labor and delivery, so that the struggling thinker can finally find himself holding a newborn baby truth; but also skill at inducing abortions when the prospects look bad, something else that midwives do, and suffering people's disapproval for it as they also do. If you did not understand the midwife's greater purpose she might seem to be nothing but an abortionist, and the ignorant resent her this practice, as people have resented Socrates for the way he puts an end to illusory insights.

Socrates credits his own infertility of soul with having brought him his midwifery skills. Roughly as midwives are bodily infertile women (though in a significant disanalogy they had borne children once), Socrates is a man whose soul generates no new truths of its own. Nevertheless this etiolated way exists for him to say he "makes philosophy," as you could say in a sense that midwives "make babies."

The analogy begins in pedagogical realities. Plato may have invented the academy but he did not dream up the philosopher. He describes what he has witnessed; and in fact students and teachers alike should be able to recognize their experiences as performances of midwifery. Teachers can recall those occasions when students came back to them knowing more than the teacher said – just as if someone else and not this teacher implanted the thought they now possess. Teaching feels suddenly easy. The students can do this themselves! And students know the times they have dragged words out of themselves all wrong for what they hoped to convey, only to see their teacher run a hand through the verbal haystack and pluck out a gleaming sharp point. Whether student surprises teacher or vice versa, the students realize how much more they are capable of than they'd thought. And they realize this — not with vanity but something more unexpected, like a newfound sense of responsibility toward the potential in themselves.

The very felicity of Plato's metaphor and its sensitivity to real-world pedagogy can get in the way here, distracting us from the role that the midwife analogy plays in this dialogue's argument. Marveling that Plato writes eternally, we forget to read him historically. But as a matter of fact, in addition to capturing something about the teaching done at all times, the midwifing metaphor also translates Socrates out of the fifth-century Athens he flourished in, into a fourth-century Athens in which schools teach Socratic philosophy. The words about philosophical midwifing that are attributed to Socrates on the eve of his trial come from another world decades after his death, when what a philosophical school did with its students no longer resembled Socratic cross-examination.

To grasp the ambition in Plato's act of translating Socrates from the previous century into his own, bear in mind how far Socrates normally is from being a teacher of philosophy. The Republic makes the point clear at least twice, with references to the historical Socrates. The first one occurs in a familiar scene: Socrates is describing the mass of humanity imprisoned in a cave, and equates the betterment of human culture with the successful escapee's return to the cave to govern it. In the Republic's good city, philosophers will recognize and respond to the obligation to govern, for they would not have become philosophers in the first place if not for the training the city provided. Now comes the reference to Socrates. In all other cities the philosophers who do exist have sprung up automatoi "spontaneously," self-generated beings. 48 In this sense an automaton is someone self-moved, as opposed to those whose movement originates in the education inserted into them. Socrates uses the word that way in Plato's Protagoras, saying that the statesman Pericles did not provide for his sons' education but let them be automatoi. Those young men frequented teachers around Athens but never lived under anyone's supervision and so learned nothing.⁴⁹

The *Republic*'s exemption for *automatoi* philosophers exonerates Socrates, whose involvement in Athenian public life was skimpy. At the same time this loophole acknowledges that he stood in need of excusing, that under the best circumstances philosophers would work within larger social institutions as Socrates himself had not done.

What charge does *automatos* carry in the passage from the *Republic*? When Socrates uses the word in Plato's *Protagoras* it is meant to condemn the sons of Pericles. They are unschooled, uncultivated, and unmannered, and they lack manners and cultivation because they were never schooled. The word will come up in the *Theaetetus* carrying bad implications again, for it will convict the philosophers from Ephesus of disorderly conduct as students of philosophy.

In Republic 7 no derogatory sense attaches to the automatos philosopher, since a philosopher is presumably a good thing.⁵⁰ Getting to that condition without training speaks well of one. But modern readers, Americans most of all, need to look at this passage without presuming that everyone shares, and that everyone in antiquity shared, our fondness for the natural musician, the born raconteur, the mechanic who never had a lesson. The fantasy of God-given talent is an attractive one and probably contributes to the ease with which outsiders enter American society. Where acculturation matters less, the foreigner can become local quicker. Unfortunately educational institutions – not just schools but all bodies charged with making the person something better - have less prestige, and receive less support, when it might be that no one really needs a lesson. And although the American ideal is anticipated in some Athenian rhetoric, notably in the funeral speech of Pericles that has Athenians acquiring a military courage and skill from birth that the Spartans train for all their lives, Pericles is far from speaking for all his contemporaries; Plato for one puts little stock in the skills one is likely to acquire without instruction.⁵¹

Epicurus, collecting students around him in Athens after Plato's death, did boast that he was self-taught. He'd never had a teacher. 52 That he would find this worth asserting, and that later histories of the subject found it worth reporting, suggests how different the usual condition of philosophers was; and Epicurus was working steadily to distinguish himself from Plato and the kind of organization that Plato had formed around him.

If that first look back, from Socrates the Republic's narrator to Socrates the man Plato knew, combines excuse with accusation, the second reference leaves him without an excuse. Later in Book 7 the Republic's conversation has returned to the subject of education for the guardians. The best young men and women will both rule and philosophize, so they need to study philosophy. But not the way young people pick it up under existing constitutions! Today, Socrates says – by which he means, "in Athens" – the young begin by watching displays of dialectical skill, the attack and the parry, the brilliant hypothesis and the telling counterexample. Eventually philosophers do have to learn these skills and to master dialectic, but they must not study it while they are still young.⁵³

Socrates was and remains famous for practicing dialectic openly, especially among the young, and unworried about the effect it might have on them. Even when Plato's Apology finds him denying other charges, he does acknowledge even offers as his defense - that the young men who knew him picked up questioning habits from him and used Socratic techniques to humiliate their elders.⁵⁴ Several sophists probably behaved as Socrates did. But that can't let Socrates off the hook, not given the dialogues' repeated insistence that the sophist differs essentially from Socrates in particular and from the philosopher as such. This comment in Book 7 is a reproach to Socrates.

The two passages from the Republic have the combined effect of removing Socrates from the process of philosophical education. As automatos philosopher he never learned the subject, and as master of disputatious dialectic he must never teach it. So it is not a claim exclusively about the *Theaetetus* that it casts Socrates as something different from a clear case of a teacher. This is just why I find such ambitions in the midwifery passage. Rather than settle for pieties about Socrates the good teacher it keeps him separate from the ranks of teachers. But most of Plato's dialogues do that much. Rather than rest with their simpler distinction between Socrates and teachers, the *Theaetetus* finds affinities between him and the profession. The midwife discussion neither accepts Socrates as an ordinary teacher nor denies him that status, but labors to find a place for the old refutationist in a world that now teaches philosophy differently. Socrates occupies an unstable middle status neither within a philosophical establishment nor outside it.

Come back to the resemblance that Socrates announces between himself and midwives. They lived past their fertility while he never attained fertility. Socrates significantly does not make maieutic skill an ability that he has *despite* his own infertility; he has the ability *because of* his infertility. Those who succeed at generating philosophical truths will not be able to draw such truths out of others in turn.

Now toward the end of his talk about being a midwife, Socrates describes what happens to the young men who associate with him. "I am not a wise man [sophos] ... But those associating [suggignomenoi] with me, some of them seem very unlearned; but as our association [sunousia] progresses ... it is marvelous [thaumaston] what they produce ... it is not from me that they learn, but themselves from themselves finding and giving birth." Modest as ever about his own claims to knowledge, Socrates praises his companions' achievement without qualification. They produce things of value around him; if such successes never took place he would be no midwife at all, only an infanticidal nurse or abortionist. So if Socrates has been right about the operating cause behind his maieutic teaching, it must follow that his successful students (which are, he claims, most of his students) are incapable of being philosophical midwives. Precisely by virtue of being fertile philosophers they lose the patronage of Artemis that the midwife requires.

And here the difference between Socrates and literal midwives finds its sting. A society whose midwives are mothers after menopause, infertile because of menopause, can reproduce itself. Girls are born, grow to be women, and give birth. Then from among those who live long enough some become midwives to guide the next generation along to produce the generation after that. Socrates can't be fit into a parallel ordering. He was never properly taught, or else he would have produced wisdom himself and thereby been disqualified from acquiring the midwife's skill. He does not help to make the next generation of philosophical midwives, because his success as a teacher implies his students' disqualification as future midwives. His complete failure on the other hand would imply that he had never really midwifed. Some other kind of philosophical teaching must exist; otherwise philosophy would perish together with the students of Socrates.

If Socrates does not enter the philosophical establishment, he also does not behave as if he lived outside it. Immediately after proclaiming how well those

promising philosophers have done who kept company with him, he complains about the ungrateful ones who left. Not recognizing how much their insights depended on Socrates, these shortsighted comrades went away (perhaps persuaded by others) before tou deontos "it was right, before they should." Passing from Socrates to a ponêran sunousia "bad company, base association," these departures found their new ideas dried up to nothing and their old ones destroyed by mistreatment. When they return seeking the sunousia of Socrates, he sometimes hears his daimonion "spirit" forbidding him to suneinai "associate" with them. 56

These sentences sound unlike the Socrates of dialogue and legend, but remarkably like the complaints of a movement's aging leader who is grumpy about defections and slow to forgive the apostates. Rival schools seem to be at work, with special animus directed against the one that stole away Aristides, grandson of Athens' famous statesman "Aristides the Just." 57 Especially bearing in mind how much later Plato is writing this dialogue, the passage suggests rivalries among Socratic schools, some of them being disqualified from legitimacy on the grounds that their founders had left Socrates' company.

The tone brings Plato's Seventh Letter to mind, with one of the episodes in that letter about Plato's trip to Syracuse and the Syracusan tyrant's attempt to learn Platonic philosophy. If this letter is genuine it really does reflect the mind of a school's leader and teacher of philosophy. Tellingly, the letter speaks of trying to lead the tyrant Dionysius through a structured introduction to philosophy, then of giving up on this education when he proved unsuited to it; and the letter denies with wounded dignity that Dionysius can now be peddling the Platonic philosophy, for as one whose acquaintance with Plato ended he had no access to elements of that philosophy.⁵⁸ Such is the language of a philosophical head of school, and it is the language Socrates uses in this passage from the Theaetetus.

The overlap in language extends to specific words shared by the Seventh Letter and this part of the Theaetetus, a cluster of words beginning with the prefix sun- "with" (also transliterated into English as syn-, as it is in words like "synergy"). The verb suneimi "to be with" and its related noun sunousia "being with, relation, association," and the verb suggignesthai "to get together with" (literally "become-with") together with its own noun suggenesis "getting-together with," appear in certain of Plato's dialogues with close to a technical institutional meaning. In general the word does not require a technical translation: Aelian, writing centuries later, will tell the anecdote about Plato at the Olympics that I recounted in the Introduction, using sunousia to point to Plato's collegiality. But an important discussion of the spurious dialogue Theages, by Harold Tarrant, takes sunousia and the other words as its springboard into an investigation of exactly this part of the midwife analogy.⁵⁹ Without going as far as Tarrant, who concludes that someone after Plato inserted Socrates' remarks about defecting students, I find his essential discoveries compelling. The Greek words in this cluster, often translated with such terms as "association," "intercourse," and "joining," can carry perfectly ordinary meanings, including everyday sexual meanings, and in the non-technical sense they appear throughout Plato's works. But in the dialogues that Xenophon wrote about Socrates, the words

occur regularly and with technical specificity to identify the pedagogical relationship between Socrates and his young associates. And in Plato's own *Protagoras*, forms of both "be with" and "get together with" appear frequently and denote the formalized meeting for study with a sophist. Plato seems to take the words to signify (when they signify anything in particular) the organized gathering one finds in schools of sophists – which means he does not want those words to apply to the informal and benign companionship that took place among Socrates and his friends.

The dialogue *Theages* uses these *sun*- words about the Socratic circle;⁶² but then the *Theages*, though accepted in antiquity as Plato's, is now attributed to a later Platonic author, probably some member of the Academy in the generations after Plato died. By that time the Academy was one school among many in a city that also contained Aristotle's Lyceum, and other collectives against whom the Platonists competed for students. The existence of several schools would make any one of them recognize its own institutional character.

The Second and Seventh Letters make frequent use of the same sun-words, 63 whether because they too were written after Plato's death; or, in the case of the Seventh Letter, for which a good argument can still be made that Plato himself wrote it, because that letter reflects Plato's special attention to his pedagogical legacy. And among the dialogues considered authentically Platonic, it is the Theaetetus that uses this language in connection with Socrates – and within the Theaetetus it is the passage about being a philosophical midwife that speaks of sunousia. 64

It is not that Plato came to see Socrates as closer to the sophists than he previously had, and therefore used *sunousia* in connection with Socratic practice, and the other words he previously reserved for sophists. If anything Socrates can now stand against Protagoras not as a non-teacher against the schoolmaster (which seems to be the subject of the *Protagoras*), but as one teacher against his rival.

It looks as though Plato has found a way to bring even that non-conformist Socrates within the project of organized education. As a midwife Socrates is still outside philosophy's traditional genealogy. But he is not just a destructive inquisitor any more, for what he does now falls under a new description. Socrates still wears out the people he talks to, and still leaves blood on the ground, but now that tussle is the effort of childbirth.

No place for philosophy

People have not noticed his midwifery, Socrates says to Theaetetus, who never heard such an activity ascribed to him, and certainly not as a *technê* "profession," which is what Socrates claims to possess. But maybe, Socrates asks, you've heard that I am *atopôtatos* "most absurd," that *poiô tous anthrôpous aporein* "I make people baffled," lead them into *aporia* "confusion, perplexity." That Theaetetus admits he has heard.

What Theaetetus has heard hews closely to what is said by the ancient authors who knew Socrates: Aristophanes, Plato, and Xenophon, as different as

they are, all depict a character who creates bafflement where there had been unperturbed sureness, especially a sureness about how to live. In calling himself a midwife Socrates purports to contextualize that breeding of confusion within a larger activity that leads to substantive knowledge among his associates. He speaks like a sculptor who's been misdescribed by ignorant observers as a man who makes and discards marble chips, and finds himself having to explain that the production and disposal of those chips is the side effect of a very different activity. What he has been seen to do needs to be understood in its proper context.

Earlier commentators used the words "positive" and "negative" in connection with Socrates more confidently than the context really permits. In these terms the Socratic aporia is negative, while teaching inculcates positive knowledge. These categories do not hold up under pressure, because every negative conclusion can be cast as a positive claim and object of knowledge, beginning with the Socratic slogan "All I know is that I know nothing." If you start out believing that you know what piety is, and Socrates subjects you to his examination, you finish without that putative knowledge of piety but in possession of a surer new knowledge, namely that you lack knowledge of piety.

Not only is this new possession considerably less attractive than the mistaken belief it replaces, it is also knowledge about a different subject, covering what you know about virtue rather than virtue as such. So the old description of Socrates can be reformulated as the claim that he gives people only knowledge about what they do and do not know, where a complete philosophical education is thought to lead to knowledge about virtues, friendship and love, and such major artifacts as art and poetry. And in calling himself a midwife, Socrates renders the aporiai he generated in people into accidents along the way to that second category of knowledge. He will sometimes leave his companion with no more knowledge than "I realize how ignorant I am" - sometimes, but not as a rule. (For if that were the only effect of his company, to say it again, he would only be a midwife for stillbirths and miscarriages.) The same practiced eye that finds one proposal wanting will approve of another. Assuming that someone else is around to teach these young men, Socrates can carry on his ancillary role.

Perhaps because he is ancillary, Socrates denies being atopôtatos - peculiar, odd, the strangest kind of person, most literally "the most out of place." A topos being a place, the atopos has no place and does not fit in; atopôtatos is merely the superlative of that adjective. Socrates puts his denial forward without vanity. It does not seem to hurt him personally that people call him an oddball. Indeed he urges Theaetetus not to betray his midwifing secret, as if Socrates were content to be seen as an oddity. He is only denying that what strikes people as his eccentricity prevents him from educating a young man like Theaetetus. Socrates does have a place, the midwife analogy is saying, and that is a place in school.

Placelessness is the specter that haunts philosophy. The atopos figure possesses a charisma born of its promise of liberation. As Alcibiades sees him in the Symposium Socrates is not merely eccentric but differs from every other human,

past or present.⁶⁵ Is this the fate of Socratic philosophy, not to belong to the species it represents?

Socrates has a reputation for turning philosophy's attention from cosmological inquiry to questions of value. That account of him neglects the sophists, but it reflects Socrates' skepticism about cosmology, as Plato reports that skepticism. Socrates reads Anaxagoras only after overhearing something about him. What a disappointment! He reads Heraclitus and likes the parts that he understands, but finds the whole thing too obscure for patient study. ⁶⁶ Unlike those philosophers Socrates will treat what is nearby and lowly, to the point of exasperating his aristocratic interlocutors with examples about weavers wearing fancy clothes and cobblers assembling shoes. ⁶⁷ This orientation toward the human can look like a turn toward greater engagement. Philosophy thereby disavows its previous alienation from humanity, somewhat as Marx would seek to disavow philosophy's alienation from its own material effectiveness.

But turning to look at the human brings a new possibility for philosophy's alienation. The philosopher becomes a spectator stepping away from the human realm to see it, in the interest of seeing it accurately, and out of the desire to see it. Socrates questioned the nature that his fellow humans knew as human nature, earning his reputation for eccentricity as the cost for occupying a vantage point beyond the world's frivolities. Then the world was the place to move from.

It is against such philosophical oddity or placelessness that the midwife analogy seeks to return the Socratic eccentric to the fold and therefore to a place. Whatever eccentricity midwifery continues to contain, it now presupposes a world of teachers and students, and academic gatherings. This world is a society, and in it philosophy can pass from being one person's way of living to a body of knowledge, available for many people at once and even to human beings at large, or the human as such. Philosophy in a school is philosophy as human possibility, with no need of eccentricities or heroics.

The question will be what philosophers stand to lose when they found schools and gather into groups. The school provides a place for the thinker that ensures he will no longer be *atopos*. But if the midwife analogy presupposes the existence of schools it also keeps the Socratic philosopher outside such gatherings and unable to start a philosophical tradition. The instability of Socrates' pedagogical function – does he bring knowledge or only deflate people's claims to know? – keeps the question open, and keeps it a bothersome question, whether the philosopher can enter such a place and continue doing what he had come to know as living.

Notes

- 1 Drury 1984: 149.
- 2 Cynics at Cynosarges, Diog. Laert. 6.13; Cynosarges for illegitimates, Dem. Arist. 23.213, saying the *nothoi* are registered at Cynosarges.
- 3 Lynch 1972: 72-74.

- 4 Xen. *Eq. mag.* ch. 3. The treatise is thought to have been written around 365, because of its references to the Theban threat. One date commonly given for the founding of Plato's Academy is 387, twenty years before Xenophon wrote about the cavalry on gymnasium grounds. Although the Academy could have been founded later, by the year 365 Plato would have been in his sixties, when according to all the available testimony the school was already in operation. One implication of the sentence in Xenophon is that some years after the founding of the school, the two gymnasia could still be thought of as interchangeable, as if nothing had happened to the civic status of the Academy when it became a place, even the homestead, for philosophy.
- 5 For a sense of the physical conditions of the gymnasium, and Athenian athletic culture, numerous recent studies of these subjects are available. Golden (1998) and Tyrrell (2004) offer the most synoptic overviews, but much information is also summarized in Poliakoff 1987, Sansone 1988, Scanlon 2002. For collections of readings on gymnasium culture from ancient authors see Miller 2004, Sweet 1987.
- 6 Pl. Rep. 3.392e-393a; the passage is Hom. Il. 1.10-32.
- 7 On literacy and democracy see Missiou 2011. Illiterate messenger describing letters he saw on sails but could not read, Eur. *Thes.* fr. 382; repeated in plays by Agathon and Theodictas (as quoted in Ath. 454b–d). See discussion by Slater (2002: 118–126).
- 8 Harris 1989: 102.
- 9 Pl. Crat. 384b, Arist. Rh. 3.1415b12; see Blank 1985: 4.
- 10 Pl. Soph. 229d–231a, with reservations noted about the subsequent difficulty of distinguishing sophist from philosopher.
- 11 Derrida 1981. For discussion see Mikics 2010: 148-151, Neel 1988: 79-84.
- Plato was said to have criticized Isocrates for charging a fee. Riginos 1976: 118n104. Diog. Laert. 4.2 says that Plato's successor Speusippus was criticized for introducing mandatory tuition fees at the Academy. This claim (unreliable in itself) suggests not that Speusippus was the first to charge fees that later became standard, but that his fees reflect the anomalous operation of the Academy under his governance. On aspects of the Athenian schools' institutional status, as well as the old vexed question of their religious functions, see discussion in Lynch 1972: 112–127.
- 13 Zhmud (1998) assesses (often skeptically) the evidence for studies of geometry and astronomy in the Academy. On the collection of botanical and zoological data at the Lyceum see Lynch 1972: 83–87.
- 14 Aristox. *Harm.* 2.30–31; see discussion by Gaiser (1980). The lecture may well have been a rarity, by comparison with Aristotle's practice of frequent public lectures: Diog. Laert. 5.37, and see Lynch 1972: 90–91.
- 15 For a comprehensive account of how Athenian schools may have operated see Rihll 2003; also Habicht 1994.
- 16 Most recently see Nikulin 2012 for representative essays on this approach; also see Findlay 1974. The account of the Academy after Plato's death in Dillon 2003 is consistent with some versions of the unwritten-doctrines theory.
- 17 Arist. Metaph. 1: see e.g. 990a30-33, 990b20-25.
- 18 Diog. Laert. 6.40.
- 19 Ath. 2 59d.
- 20 Simon 1973: 15. Willie's point was articulated much earlier than this play, though only as a claim about American humor, in Mencken 1948: "k,' for some occult reason, has always appealed to the oafish risibles of the American plain people."
- 21 On this tradition see Zhmud 1998: 226.
- Heath 1926: III, 438. A Platonic solid is a polyhedron whose faces are all congruent regular polygons (all triangles, all squares, or all pentagons, each with its sides having equal length, and all the faces identical with one another). The same number of faces meet at each vertex.

- Theaetetus: evidence from *Suda*, Zhmud 1998: 226, 226n51; from Proclus, ibid.: 224; see Procl. *Euclid* 67–8.
- 24 Pl. Tht. 144c.
- 25 Pl. Euthyd. 271a, Lysis 203a-b, Chrm. 153a.
- 26 Brandwood (1992) surveys a number of plausible stylometric analyses that all support this claim.
- The *Philebus* is the most obvious exception to the pattern I claim, but only assuming a late date for it, and that is a contested claim. See Waterfield 1980, before that Ryle 1966: 251–252. If Waterfield is right, the *Philebus* belongs directly after the *Republic* and specifically before the *Theaetetus*. That would make the *Theaetetus* a fulcrum, with all dialogues led by Socrates preceding it and all dialogues not led by him subsequent to the *Theaetetus*.
- 28 Ledger 1989.
- 29 Thesleff 1982.
- Thus Nails (1992). Her chart comparing Ledger's and Thesleff's chronologies reinforces the general idea of how late the *Theaetetus* must appear in the corpus. Nails is wary of drawing a conclusion here, given her resistance to Platonic chronologies. But she points out that Ledger's data put the *Theaetetus* closer to the *Republic*, *Phaedo*, etc., than to the "later" works, even closer to those than to the dialogues that it goes with (*Sophist*, *Statesman*).
- 31 For this split as an elaboration within Indo-European tripartitions of society see Dumézil 1988 [1948].
- The translation by Joe Sachs begins with "Right now" and draws attention to this initiatory word for some of the same reasons I do, Sachs 2004: 13n1. Seth Benardete's translation begins the same way, Benardete 1986: I.3.
- 33 For cautions about the misuse of Platonic first words see Burnyeat 2012: 308. I agree with Burnyeat's use of Proclus to say that the opening words in a dialogue do not function as the code to what follows, rather that the heart of what follows will be reflected in the opening words. I take what I say to be consistent with this injunction.
- 34 Pl. *Tht.: thaumazô* in introduction, 142a, and as characteristic of philosopher, 155d; agora in introduction, 142a, and as the place that is not the philosopher's haunt, 173c.
- 35 Pl. Tht.: Eucleides compiled written record, 142c-e; they sit down to listen, 143b.
- 36 Thesleff 1982: 83–87; see Tarrant 2010.
- Diog. Laert. 3.6, 2.100. According to Cicero, the school in Megara had ties to Eleatic philosophy; ibid. 2.106–107 says it was known for eristic and dialectics. See Nails 2002: 145. On the titles of dialogues by Eucleides, Diog. Laert. 2.108.
- 38 Pl. Rep. 392d-394c.
- 39 Diog. Laert. 3.6.
- 40 Tarrant 2010: n26.
- 41 Chappell (2004: 30) is one commentator who calls the frame a distancing effect.
- 42 Pl. Tht. 143d.
- 43 Pl. *Tht.*: examine Theaetetus, 145b; growing wiser, 145d; wisdom is knowledge, 145e; what is knowledge? 145e–146a.
- 44 "I'm perplexed," Pl. *Tht.* 145e. The general study of Platonic *aporia* is relevant here. Nightingale (2010) argues that *aporia* changes in the middle dialogues. Though she does not discuss the *Theaetetus*, something she says about *Meno* and *Republic* applies to this dialogue too; *aporia* is now "an epistemic perplexity that is instrumental ... not a form of self-knowledge or ethical wisdom," Nightingale 2010: 18. I would add that *aporia* now enters the curriculum.
- 45 Diog. Laert. 5.47; see also 1.18. Rowe and Boys-Stones (2013) are interpretive minimalists about "schools" of philosophy, unwilling to turn a grouping of like-minded thinkers into a recognizable institution; but they represent perhaps one extreme on the spectrum.

- 46 Pl. Tht.: Theaetetus confesses, 148e; Socrates as midwife, 149a-151c.
- 47 See Pl. Tht. 173c.
- 48 Pl. Rep. 7.520b.
- 49 Pl. Prt. 320a; cf. Euthyd. 282c, where the automatos is opposed to what is taught.
- In conversation Michael Naas expressed the contrary view to me, that those automatic figures in *Republic* 7 are not real philosophers, or not by the *Republic*'s standards. I share Naas's suspicion that a tension exists in this passage comparable to what I am claiming about the *Theaetetus*, that someone like Socrates belongs to a different kind from the new official philosophers of the new city. But it goes too far to conclude that the Socratic type fails to be a philosopher as a result; indeed my point regarding the *Theaetetus*, which in some ways should apply to the *Republic*, is that it is impossible to put Socrates either within the tribe of real philosophers or outside it.
- Thuc.: Pericles calls Athens the school of Greece, 2.41.1, but without evident interest in schooling for Athenians; no need for Athenians to train as Spartans do, 2.39.1. On education in the speech of Pericles, and how Plato would have perceived Pericles as educator, see Pappas and Zelcer 2015: 99–104.
- 52 Diog. Laert. 10.9.
- 53 Pl. Rep. 7.537e-539c.
- 54 Pl. Ap. 23c.
- 55 Pl. Tht. 150d.
- 56 Pl. Tht.: left before they should, 150e; daimonion forbidding him, 150e-151a.
- On Aristides the Just see Pl. *Grg.* 526b, *Meno* 94a, Herod. 8.79, Plut. *Arist.* 7.4–6. On his grandson's relations with Socrates see Plato *Laches*, which sets the education of this younger Aristides as the problem to be solved. The *Laches* appears to have been written to account for this young man's place in the Socratic circle; the dyspeptic mention in the *Theaetetus* suggests that Plato took his defection personally.
- 58 Plato L7 340b-341c.
- 59 Tarrant 2005.
- 60 Tarrant 2005: 138n28.
- 61 Tarrant 2005: 133n11.
- 62 Tarrant 2005: 131–133.
- 63 Tarrant 2005: 150–151.
- 64 Pl. Tht.: forms of suneinai, 150d4, 151a3, 151a4; forms of suggignesthai, 150d2, 151a6. Tarrant 2005: 136.
- 65 Pl. Sym. 221d. Alcibiades specifies that it is the atopia "strangeness, the quality of being atopos" of Socrates and the things Socrates says that sets him apart from all other human beings.
- 66 Anaxagoras: Pl. Phd. 97b–99c; Heraclitus: Diog. Laert. 2.22, see also 9.11–12.
- 67 Pl. Grg. 490d–e.

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2 Being a philosopher teaching philosophy

For a sense of the *Theaetetus*'s idea of philosophical institutions it is almost enough to see what the dialogue makes of philosophical writing and reading. Those activities turn up in other dialogues too, for Plato lives amid a growing culture and expectation of literacy. The other passages in his dialogues have attracted an understandable amount of attention, a quantity of attention that distracts from the looks at reading and writing to be found in the *Theaetetus*, even though the philosophical text has quite a special fate there.

The *Republic* contains the claim made by Socrates, much discussed, that justice in the city will be like large-letter writing that makes it easier to read small letters saying the same thing. Here writing is the essential act of pattern recognition but only as metaphor. It is hardly more than a metaphor in Plato's *Phaedrus* either, when Socrates cautions philosophers against writing anything more than notes to themselves. A philosophical book should be something for only its author to read, and given such condemnation of all philosophical writing it is no surprise that this dialogue attaches little value to philosophical reading.¹

The *Apology* dismisses Anaxagoras as a philosophical author who would have been better off heeding the *Phaedrus*'s advice. Crass cosmology available everywhere at low cost, the work of Anaxagoras sounds like what the *Theaetetus* will say that Heraclitean philosophy has become. To Socrates at his trial it does not even matter that Anaxagoras wrote his ideas down: any philosophy that can be sloganeered and circulated as this philosophy is deserves to be ignored. Certainly no promising tradition can be built up out of such books.²

But Anaxagoras turns up again in jail, shortly before Socrates will drink hemlock and die, and after all the failed arguments for immortality that have been tried that day he seems determined to produce a successful one. In this sense Plato has the Socratic legacy in mind, for as the *Phaedo*'s framing dialogue makes clear this work was written some time after the death of Socrates and people in small Peloponnesian towns are still talking about him. The *Phaedo* even identifies the friends of Socrates who gathered round him on his last day, not quite to identify all legitimate heirs – for then it would be embarrassing that Plato missed the occasion – but as a first act of sorting out the true Socratic philosophers from illegitimate claimants to his legacy.³

On the occasion that resembles the reading of a will, Socrates emphasizes his own inheritance from earlier thinkers, or rather the inheritance he refused. Here is where Anaxagoras turns up again, in the passage of "intellectual autobiography" that Plato's interpreters have found irresistible.

Socrates speaks of having begun his inquiry with metaphysical yearnings. He hoped for enlightenment from Anaxagoras, who according to rumor made *nous* "mind, intelligence" the formative cause of the world. These great hopes came to nothing, Socrates says, when he borrowed the book by Anaxagoras and discovered what mindless materialism it had to offer. It was then, and bent on understanding the universe along different lines, that he went on to formulate his own theory of intelligible causation.⁴

How fairly this passage represents Anaxagoras is hard to say. His book is unknown today, partly because of the rejection it suffers in the *Phaedo*. But if Socrates faced some hermeneutical issue in confronting the book of Anaxagoras, you would not know it from his remarks. This passage treats philosophical reading as straightforward communication, indeed as communication that is direct enough to be the same as studying with Anaxagoras in person. Socrates would gladly have been the *mathêtês* "student" of Anaxagoras, being deprived of that opportunity only by Anaxagoras's unacceptable materialism. This book of Anaxagoras did not extend the philosophical tradition, for Socrates responded by rejecting all its claims. And in the process, the business of how to read philosophical works the right way failed to come up.

Incomplete as it is, this sampling of the dialogues' remarks about reading philosophy is enough to identify a contrast with the position to be found in Plato's *Theaetetus*. In that dialogue Socrates will press the difficulties latent in philosophical reading, even to the point of dismissing the species of dissemination of philosophy that does not conceal its meanings. In the school-oriented *Theaetetus*, a proper teacher of philosophy vouchsafes the true readings of his books to his students. For this reason philosophical writing is both essential to the subject and nevertheless supplementary to formal teaching. Philosophy is a tradition and has a history, and it becomes a historical subject not primarily through the writing and then reading of transparent communications, but through the teaching and then learning of esoteric doctrines. Philosophy understood as historical consists in reading, and it is significant to a historical philosophy that it does so, but that reading needs to be queried in its own right.

The cost of entering the Academy

If a school of philosophy means (what is obvious enough) a historical tradition that the teacher belongs to and brings the student into, and (less obviously) also means encrypted philosophical writing, maybe together with a suspicious approach to reading, then it is harder to say as we might be tempted to that the change to philosophical schooling is always unfortunate, corrupting, or in some respect morally deadened.

The warning might seem unnecessary. But it is worth bearing in mind that such institutional transformations have no single moral except in moralizing interpretations. Jokes about professors encourage one moralizing interpretation of the turn toward philosophical schools, as an expulsion from true philosophy into a life of cultivating the disciplinary field by the sweat of the high brow and bringing forth students in pain. Narratives of universal decline are a little better as templates than stories that promise steady progress — they feel less childish and less magical — but not much. For besides the invariance that renders both kinds of account non-stories, they make poor guides to close study. One is not really talking about philosophy or school, but about either the world's depravity or its lovable perfectibility.

So suppose we ask in the way that guileless people do: What changes in this move from *atopia* to Academy? Where to look?

For example, philosophers working in universities today are likely to associate the academic version of their lives with pressure in the direction of a division of labor. One of them works in ethics, another one in epistemology, and then their areas subdivide into narrower specializations. On this model, you might be tempted to find a comparable division of labor in the Athenian schools. But this extension of the modern institution does not have to follow, and Plato probably did not see schools and schooling this way. And in general the characteristics typical of academia today might or might not show what to look for in antiquity.

Consider the institution's demands on intellectual loyalty. Is the lone thinker also the free thinker? – on the grounds that the scholarly institution encourages fashion, which is to say a habit of thinking (and speaking, reading, and dressing) as others do, *for the reason* that others think (or speak, read, dress) in that way. Some question of independence may emerge from this look into the *Theaetetus*, but then it still remains to be seen what kind of independence is at stake: freedom from conformance with one's peers, or from accommodation to the larger world?

The *Theaetetus* sees schools of philosophy everywhere, both in the sense of places where philosophy is taught and also the school as a collection of like-minded thinkers, a school of thought. This probably means *rival* schools and scholarly battles, and a division within the philosophical population very different from the division of labor. The division of labor is an agreeable separation of tasks in the interests of efficiency and excellence, as in the city Plato proposes in the *Republic*. It is supposed to bring the end of rivalries.

The previous chapter focused on the way in which Socrates in the *Theaetetus* both is and is not a teacher. He teaches in the same sense in which a midwife births. By surrounding him with other examples of teaching and school — successful examples, but failures too — the dialogue indicates why his ambiguous position matters. This chapter, moving on from the one before, will propose a reading of the tension between philosophers as human beings who think and philosophers who have removed themselves from the collectivity of the human to a community within the larger whole.

Begin where Socrates begins, with Protagoras. Plato's dialogue *Protagoras* had already cast its title character as a teacher, and not merely a teacher insofar as he is a sophist. In other dialogues about sophists, teaching is a minor issue if not absent, but the *Protagoras* both inquires into what Protagoras teaches and uses him as the springboard to questions about teaching.

The portrayal seems to be based on biographical fact. Later authors will also identify Protagoras as a sophist who taught and charged high fees for teaching, and they are not merely following Plato when they say so; and statements that Protagoras purportedly made *about* teaching appear in these later testimonies. "One must begin learning [from youth]." "Teaching [didaskalia] requires nature and exercise." Stobaeus has him talking like a seasoned teacher: "Protagoras used to say that neither skill [technê] without practice [meletê], nor practice without study, is anything."

Protagoras is very much a teacher in the *Theaetetus*, too. Socrates imagines him passing secret doctrines along to his students, and ascribes a theory of education to Protagoras. In one argument against Protagorean relativism, Socrates uses Protagoras's reputation as a teacher as a kind of hostage. Relativism coming from a teacher refutes itself. If everyone speaks truly just by virtue of speaking, then "how is Protagoras wise, and how does he deserve to be the teacher [didaskalos] of other people?" The argument has teeth on the assumption that Protagoras wants the status of teacher.⁸

Socrates proposes that Protagoras has some real philosophy stashed away that does not lead to untenable relativistic conclusions. Of the famous aphorism about man the measure of all things he says, "Protagoras is somehow speaking with the vulgar [dêmoumenon]." Relativism is the position distributed at large, hiding what Protagoras really has to say.

Socrates puts his own teaching on a par with Protagoras's. While relativism defeats what Protagoras does as an instructor – the more damning charge – it will also threaten what Socrates does, which he refers to as *tês emês technês tês maieutikês* "my own midwifing profession." For Socrates to call his own activity a *technê* gives him something like a teaching *career*, and later, when Socrates envisions Protagoras returning from the underworld to defend himself, he has the revenant call him, Socrates, a fellow teacher. Socrates does not reject the label. ¹⁰

In other works Socrates refuses to be called a teacher. Both Plato and Xenophon record him asking how he could teach when he knows nothing. These young men merely collect around him and listen to his conversations, etc.¹¹ What has teaching come to mean, that Socrates should belong to the profession together with Protagoras? And you may also ask: What does teaching *not* mean? Is everyone a teacher now, or will the *Theaetetus* exclude some pretenders from the group?

For one thing, Protagoras emerges as a traditionalist in the *Theaetetus*, or at least traditional given a particular reading of philosophy's history. His book *Alêtheia "Truth"* is famous for expounding relativism, or subjectivism, the view that every statement someone believes to be true has the same value as any other. Every statement believed true becomes true. That seems to be the point

of saying that man is the measure, that each human measures out and weighs what is true. Socrates calls the epistemological doctrine a disguised version of Heraclitean flux, the immediate implication of flux. Subjectivism follows from the changeability of nature inasmuch as that changing condition leaves nothing standing in the natural world above and beyond whatever opinions people form about that world. If Heraclitus is right, nothing more can be said about nature than individual reports of how this or that bit of nature appears (to someone) to be situated at any moment. Therefore Protagoras is right on the assumption that Heraclitus is right, and for that reason he can be seen as a member of the same tradition that Heraclitus belongs to.

Indeed Socrates claims that most thinkers have held some version of the same nature philosophy. He traces the flux doctrine back to Homer, thanks to the line in *Iliad* Book 14 that calls Ocean and his consort Tethys the "origin of all." Parmenides and his philosophical allies constitute the only alternative tradition. As a teacher, Protagoras can be seen to be initiating his students not only into his own philosophy but into a capacious intellectual world that predates him. Teaching means bringing students into the history of philosophy.

Nor is that verb "initiate" an idle metaphor. Socrates speaks of the school of Protagoras in language appropriate to a religious cult, complete with doctrines that only the trusted insiders possess.¹⁴

Teaching does not begin with an individual teacher. The proposal that philosophy has a history – common talk today, almost unheard of in Plato's dialogues – makes the teacher Protagoras also a student, teaching now by continuing to transmit what had once been transmitted to him.

Wherever the theory of flux did begin, it first appeared as explicit doctrine with Heraclitus. He lived in Ephesus, and after his death the city seems to have produced an entire school of thought devoted to natural change, for in the *Theaetetus* Socrates and Theodorus speak of "the Ephesians," who function as a school. The Ephesians *chorêgousi* the doctrine of natural change, which is to say they chant it as the chorus chants in a tragedy, therefore – as the verb must imply – in unison. ¹⁵

On the other hand Theodorus complains that one can't talk theory with the philosophers from Ephesus; so one wonders what kind of unison this can be. They keep altering their position. Reply to one cryptic remark and they'll come back at you with another one. They *apotexeuousi* "shoot" (from *toxos* "arrow") their answers *hôsper ek pharetras* "as if from a quiver"; whoever is arguing against them could be *peplêxêi* "struck, hit" by a new wordplay. Those Ephesians *panu polemousin* "battle exceedingly" against anything stationary or the thought that things will remain stationary.¹⁶

But couldn't it be (Socrates asks) that these guerrilla tactics only reflect how the Ephesians behave when they are being attacked? He has already called the philosophical tradition a *stratopedon* "army" with Homer for a general; has said they should be *sumpheresthon* "brought together" as if for an engagement; spoken of philosophers as constituting a chorus.¹⁷ Nor do the dialogues' famous attacks on tragedy make this last metaphor a belittling figure of speech, as if

Socrates were saying that philosophers herd together with malign intent (as you might expect in Plato; for what would be worse intent than that of making a tragedy?). When the *Theaetetus* digresses to describe the true philosopher, Socrates will introduce him as *koruphaios* of the philosophical community, literally the choral leader. Whatever else goes wrong in tragedy, it does not go wrong by virtue of the group activity in it. Cooperative collective effort marks the activity of philosophers.

When the *Theaetetus* conceives philosophy as game rather than as drama or warfare, several metaphors again suggest collective activity — not surprising language for sports fans today, who mostly enjoy sports by following teams, but surprising in the extreme in connection with the Greeks, for whom athletics meant individual competition. (At the major Greek Games only horses competed in teams. ¹⁹) The *Theaetetus* contains the comparison Socrates makes between the participants in their conversation and *sphairizontes* "ball players," in resemblance to whom one of those philosophizing who makes a mistake will have to "sit out as the donkey," and the one who outlasts the others will rule. Was this game *ostrakinda*, in which one group of boys chased another? For the game to go on while one sits out, there must be a number of players, likely formed into teams. And teams are certainly involved when Socrates casts the history of philosophy as a debate between two rival camps — the theorists of natural flux against the Parmenideans — philosophers of his time entering the debate as they might join a game of tug-of-war. ²⁰

But the Ephesians might gather for collective effort too, in that case, at least when they put their weapons down; so Socrates suggests. Armies go home. The Ephesians must have moments among friends too, when they eirênousin "speak peaceably." Socrates imagines them expounding their theory of nature in more systematic terms "in school [epi scholês] to their students [mathêtais], whom they want to make [poiêsai] similar to themselves [homoious hautois]." There must be Ephesian schools of philosophy, organized into teachers and students, that bring those students into the larger tradition.

Socrates is equating teaching with the act of making others similar to oneself. If every teacher did that, a scholarly tradition would become an unbroken chain.

The word *scholê*, cognate and origin of the English "school," most often means "leisure" in Greek authors of the time, including Plato. It has not yet taken on "school" as a primary and immediate meaning. This dialogue alone uses *scholê* on several occasions to mean "leisure," with no other natural translation possible. But in the passage at hand Socrates is picturing the Ephesians among their students, perhaps also at leisure (for after all the metaphor tells us that schooling was seen as leisure activity) but specifically teaching and learning. And Aristotle will soon be saying *scholê* where that can only refer to a school, in a passage that also uses the related word *scholastikos* for a kind of scholar. So when Socrates speaks of the Ephesians *epi scholês* it is reasonable to take him to be talking about schools, and to be wondering whether the Ephesians run a philosophical institution in the way that Protagoras does. Many people work together integrating students into a tradition. The extreme institutionalists make their students resemble them.

Theodorus tells Socrates to abandon such ideas. There is no such thing as school among the Heracliteans, and no one is a student. They spring up *automatoi*, as the *Republic* said that philosophers spring up in existing cities.²⁴ In the present passage an automatic origin is a bad thing, separating the Ephesian philosophers both from Protagoras and from Socrates, who claims some credit for guiding and testing his charges. However, Socrates and Protagoras turn out to differ, their shared difference from the philosophers of Ephesus becomes another similarity in their teaching. Teachers at peace socialize. It only remains to ask what they say when they gather together, perhaps what they say to their students that they refrain from telling the world.

Unwritten teachings

When Theodorus complains that no one plays the role of a student among Ephesian philosophers, one thing he means to deny is any relationship of superior to inferior within the philosophical world at Ephesus. The student not only comes to school and hears, for teachers can do that much by themselves and amongst themselves, but also defers to the teacher. The student does not set the standards or name the terms of the education.

Among most ancient teachers the difference in rank between teacher and student expressed itself in the act of withholding. How much should philosophers divulge to students? Socrates notoriously let himself speak freely in front of anyone who came to listen, but then this was one reason not to call him a teacher. Plato's works sometimes press the contrary principle, urging teachers not to show their students everything about philosophy until the young are ready – probably until they are no longer young.

One example of teacherly withholding appeared in Chapter 1, in connection with the *Republic*. The young guardians will not learn dialectic, even though its methods are so important to philosophy that dialectic crowns the middle-aged ruler's lifelong education. When Socrates mocks Callicles, in the *Gorgias*, for wanting to skip ahead in his philosophical learning, he implies that not everything should be told to the student at once. Callicles wants to proceed straight to the Greater Mysteries (as Socrates puts it) without having passed through the Lesser Mysteries first. The mystery cult at Eleusis evidently subjected its participants to two stages of initiation, on separate occasions; Plato makes that initiation his model for training in philosophy, the final revelation preceded by a limited earlier version. If Plato did write the *Seventh Letter* attributed to him, or even if someone else from the Academy did, that document too shows that the Platonic school organized instruction according to some principle of order.²⁶

Whether in antiquity or in a modern university, the instructor who keeps something back from the student fears that a premature display will spoil the education. In the worst case the result is moral corruption, as in those contentious young men the *Republic* describes, made disrespectful by dialectic. (What the *Republic* fears, the *Clouds* accuses Socrates of having done. At his school Socrates divulges arcane theories to a coarse farmer and his idle son, and they

turn into a scofflaw and a rebel.) But it is bad enough when an accelerated education leaves students deluded that they understand more than they do, or disrespectful of a subject so easily mastered. This worry takes a modern form when instructors expose the young to modernist critiques of philosophy itself – Nietzsche's, in the continental tradition; Wittgenstein's critique among analytic philosophers - as if to reveal the man behind the curtain just as students are setting out for the Emerald City.²⁷

Organizing education in stages bespeaks the hierarchy in which teacher ranks above students. There is pathos of distance in such pedagogy, even when the teacher plays dumb to keep the students' attention on the pleasures of the preliminaries. Setting up a philosophical difficulty, and pretending to get a glimpse of the solution that you have in fact presented endlessly before other classes, stages the comedy latent in this inequality. (It is a denial of rank that reinforces rank. Only the one above can effect this pretense of equality.) In the tragic version of teaching, the pedagogical distance produces teacher-gurus who let students see them as something more than they are.

Because the modern age takes special interest in detecting hierarchical differences, it may see the strategic effect of withholding knowledge more easily than the effect of later vouchsafing the delayed knowledge; as if the politics of unequal learning came to an end in a post-political democracy among teachers and their former students, all united in what they know. Holding knowledge back enhances differences between teacher and student on that view, and releasing the knowledge effaces them. In fact the eventual revelation is, if anything, more politically significant for the making of a school. As students come to know everything their teacher knows, and because the teacher first kept this knowledge secret and continues not to publicize it, the final disclosures made within the school increase the difference between its students and everyone else: between the finished students and the great population of the ignorant, obviously, but also between one school's members and another's.

Where telling students more than they should know invites ethical worry about their souls, telling them what no one else knows creates the school in a political sense. Now there is an academic inside and a world outside that has not been told the secret.

The Orphic tradition gives us one of the few sights of philosophical teaching in Plato's time that we have access to without interference from his testimony, mainly thanks to the Derveni Papyrus. That set of papyrus fragments, discovered only half a century ago, has been dated to Plato's adult lifetime, while its content is probably older than that, having been composed during the life of Socrates. Being a guide to Hades for participants in Orphism, the content of this document seems to have been frequently recopied then burnt together with the initiates' bodies.²⁸

Much of the surviving papyrus consists in verses attributed to the legendary poet Orpheus, each verse followed by an interpretation that translates the poem's mythical theogony into the language of naturalistic cosmology.²⁹ The author presents this exegesis as both instructional and closely allied with philosophy. He quotes Heraclitus and calls him *hierologos* "knowledgeable about holy things." For the Derveni author, philosophical teaching includes the act of expounding meanings that no untutored reading could have uncovered – for instance that "Ocean" means air. Orpheus is a "riddler" in need of decoding for initiates. The open quality of this interpretive method has been remarked on.³⁰

When Socrates takes up the book that Protagoras titled *Truth*, he resembles the Derveni author in treating an authoritative text as a riddle in need of interpretation, with instruction consisting in such guided reading. The specific sign of a school's existence is the classroom revelation. This is where the dialogue's conception of reading and writing comes into play – encrypted writing, reading as decoding.

Theaetetus provides the occasion for philosophical reading already at the beginning of his session with Socrates, when he replies to the opening question "What is knowledge?" with his suggestion that knowledge is identical with aisthêsis "perception." Socrates replies by citing Truth and its first sentence "Man is the measure of all things." Same idea, really. Protagoras defined knowledge as Theaetetus did, although he said it tropon tina allon "in another manner." Has Theaetetus read that sentence about "the measure of all things"? Oh yes. "I have read it many times," Theaetetus says; and even though Socrates himself can only claim to have heard what other people say about Protagoras's book, he goes on to offer a deep reading or deciphering of the sentence. "He is saying in a way [pôs] that as each thing appears to me, that's how it is for me, and as it appears to you, it is that way for you. And 'man' [anthrôpos] is you and me." 31

There is the sentence from the book and then there is what that sentence says $p\delta s$ "in a way" or in another manner, namely that knowledge is perception. But even this deeper reading turns out to have been only a provisional rendering of Protagoras. "Did he riddle [$\hat{e}inixato$] this to the garbage crowd, while he spoke the truth to his students in secret?"³²

Because "Truth" is the name of the book that Protagoras wrote, the suggestion that he told his students "truth" describes both teaching and reading. Sequestered among his *mathêtais* "students" Protagoras told them the truth about nature, and this telling amounted to giving them the real version of the book *Truth* that he had written, which Socrates will also call giving them *tên alêtheian apokekrummenên* "the hidden truth." This is the Heraclitean doctrine of natural change, which now comes forward as the hidden version of *Truth*, its esoteric reading, the book inside that book as only Protagoras's students could have had it elucidated for them. They must have been able to look at the book's words and hear what no one else heard in those words.

Socrates will reread that same famous sentence from *Truth*, or rather will suggest a rewriting of the sentence that makes it read newly, and preposterously. "I have wondered, marveled [tethaumaka] over the beginning of his work," Socrates says. The archê tou logou can be literally the first part of what Protagoras wrote, "the beginning of his work" as the first words a reader encounters, but it can also be the ruling principle of his argument. Any book's first sentence could be both, mind you. What Socrates marveled over was the

53

fact that Protagoras "did not say, in beginning his *Truth*, that 'of all things the measure is pig' or 'doghead' or something else still odder [atopôteron] of those beings that have perception."³⁴

Relativism packs much less of a punch on either of these new renditions of the sentence. It is no wonder that when Socrates imagines conjuring up Protagoras to answer the arguments against him as if at a séance, the revenant will take issue with the animal joke. It spoils the effect of the book's opening, putting a barnyard joke where there had been a clue to the ancient doctrine of flux. Imagine your sense of what a book has in store if it begins "All happy puppies are alike"; or "Call me Fish Meal." Word substitution is the path to instant deflationary bathos.

The dismay that Protagoras had to have felt at this violation of his maxim brings the *Phaedrus*'s account of writing to mind, in which Socrates tells Phaedrus that the philosopher who commits his thoughts to writing will soon find them rolling around everywhere and seized by strangers who mistreat them. ³⁵ In that sense Protagoras is suffering in the *Theaetetus* what the *Phaedrus* says every author is bound to suffer. The two dialogues are more thoroughly compatible than that, inasmuch as the *Phaedrus* implies that among serious authors writing will appear only in conjunction with an unwritten doctrine. The vulnerability of writing to abuse follows from its potential for ambiguity – in Protagoras's case that being the syntactical ambiguity of the sentence about "man," so available as it is for restatement as a sentence about a pig or "doghead."

Given the vulnerability of writing, the act of caching an esoteric teaching inside a philosophical text forestalls the fated willful mistreatment of that text. The teaching that has been hidden cannot be distorted when one misquotes or misrepresents the written words. The secrecy shields the idea from easy distorting reuse. This is a reading, for those in the know, that ordinary readers can't abuse.

But at the same time – and here is where the *Phaedrus* and *Theaetetus* meet – the act of esoteric writing depends on the same feature of writing that is exploited by the act of mistreating some writing. If ambiguity and openness in written words let the mischievous reader see things that aren't there, like pigs, they also give the crafty writer the opportunity to put things there that aren't seen. What might be taken another way can be said another way. The openness of written language, while still a weakness, also creates a place to hide a meaning.

What makes the line between parody and serious interpretation so hard to draw is that they respond to the same plenitude of meaning in writing. Consider the two major examples in Plato's dialogues of Socrates' revisitations of a text: his reading of a poem written by Simonides, in the *Protagoras*; and in the *Menexenus* his funeral speech, constituting almost the entirety of that dialogue, that rewrites the funeral speech attributed to Pericles. Contemporary scholars treat both passages as jokes or parodies more often than they consider them serious. And yet in both cases the outcome is a Socratic ethical principle. Socrates bends the poem by Simonides until it says that no one voluntarily does wrong; he makes the *Menexenus* funeral speech close with a Platonic exhortation to virtue. Reading

the passages as parody one often ignores this fact about them. In light of the *Phaedrus*'s account of writing, and in keeping with what I am calling the *Theaetetus*'s account of teaching (or its account of teaching by means of writing), the difficulty that interpreters have in deciding between parodic and serious readings of those passages derives from the openness in all writing to which both are responses.³⁶ The written word does not determine what a philosopher can do with it, if Socrates is any model of the philosopher.

But surely Socrates is joking in these alleged discoveries of secret teaching in the *Theaetetus*? If not when he digs into Protagoras and finds Heraclitus, there is his dig into Homer that also finds (of all people) Heraclitus. The *Iliad*'s mentions of "Ocean and Tethys the genesis of all" allegedly initiated the flux tradition, so that Protagoras and Empedocles, the comic poet Epicharmus and Heraclitus as well, all follow the insight first darkly hinted at in Homer. Ocean sounds like a plausible principle of water; but why read Ocean as natural change?³⁷

You may well find the picture of a Heraclitean tradition to be Platonic trifling, and especially this proposal that a theory of flux lies within a poet as free of allegories as Homer is. You are free to read the interpretive claim as irony. It wouldn't be irony if it could not be read either way, but something else – often sarcasm. Nevertheless the ironic reading of the passage misses something, which might be this dialogue's main point about teaching. Socrates consistently portrays Protagoras as a teacher and attributes unwritten doctrines to him that have been encoded into his book. And both he and Theodorus reject the Ephesians' claim to be teachers, in part because they do not carry on the same teacherly practice of encrypting their own true doctrines. If Socrates is joking about Homeric philosophy, then the dialogue's treatment of teaching and esoteric writing loses its most eminent example.

"But Ocean-as-flux is such a forced reading. Remember that *flux* in Greek literally means 'flame." But the Derveni author's reading of Ocean is no less forced, and whatever the experts on that papyrus conclude one day about its author, they are not going to say that he or she was joking. The resemblance goes beyond talk of Ocean. If a reading did not have a forced quality it could not be recognized as a secret teaching. We can get unforced readings from amateurs; we go to skilled readers in search of more.

We left the Ephesian philosophers where Theodorus was denouncing them. They have no students and they practice no instruction, Theodorus says, and Socrates accepts his judgment. Socrates decides to proceed beyond the Ephesians to the heart of the natural philosophy they subscribe to. And now he repeats what he had said earlier about Homer, Ocean, and the theory of natural change.

The second time that Socrates comes to the passage, he makes his discussion a critique of Ephesian philosophical discourse. The *archaioi* or ancients, the earliest thinkers, had the virtue of keeping what they said *epikruptomenôn tous pollous* "hidden away from the many." Later thinkers were "wiser," but he means pseudo-sophisticated. He is calling them wise guys. These latter-day philosophers, putatively wise, have taken the same idea that had been stashed away in their forebears and *anaphandon apodeiknumenôn* "demonstrated it visibly,

openly," so that, as he sneers, kai hoi skutotomoi autôn tên sophian mathôsin akousantes ... mathontes de hoti panta kinetai timôsin autous "Even shoemakers learn that wisdom from them ... and having learned that everything moves, honor their teachers."38

Following as it does the accusation that the Ephesians do not teach or learn, this aside from Socrates encapsulates where their failure lies as teachers. The flux doctrine is superior in its original form, as allegorically asserted in Homer, by virtue of its riddling language. The explicitness of the Heracliteans goes with their inability to teach or learn. (If this is a joke too, then Socrates actually considers the Ephesians to be good teachers. I cannot imagine that as a possibility.) Again teaching is seen to convey a secret meaning within public writing. Having no private students to whom they entrust their vision of nature, the philosophers of Ephesus send the theory out into the public.

And although it is hard to pin the *Theaetetus* down regarding Heraclitus himself, Theodorus's criticism of the latter-day Ephesians may well extend back to the master as the one who inaugurated their avoidance of education. In this respect Plato has understood Heraclitus more clearly than the Derveni author did. The book that Heraclitus wrote could easily have underwritten these epigones' attitude, given that the few extant words from that book include his claim of philosophical self-creation edizêsamen emeôuton "I have sought for myself," i.e. without mentors and professors, and the pronouncement that polumathiê "learning of many things" does not teach wisdom. 39

The shoemaker

The aside from Socrates about shoemakers sounds mean-spirited. The Ephesians have vulgarized philosophy until every dunce with a day job can repeat the metaphysical news. Or really, rather than news you ought to call it rumor, for Socrates is implying that when it has been put in such plain terms a philosophical conclusion can be no better than something one hears, something "they say"; something that happened to the friend of a friend.

Only one other passage in the Platonic dialogues voices such distaste for skilled working people. That one is an aside in the Republic in which Socrates compares pretenders to philosophy with a little bald tinker, newly rich, who makes bold to dress himself finely and marry his former boss's daughter. 40 At least the butt of that joke only wants to pass for a master tinker. The figure seems to be a slave who bought his freedom, in which case the passage is trading on the difference between free and slave. But while the tinker might symbolize pseudo-philosophers, he is not portrayed as a tinker wanting to pass as an actual philosopher. In the Theaetetus Socrates takes the shoemaker to task for presuming to learn philosophy.

On top of being unkind, the choice of shoemaker is perplexing in light of how often Plato's Socrates cites that profession as an example of a technê boasting genuine knowledge of its subject matter. Not only that, an exchange early in this same dialogue had spoken of the shoemaker's expertise as

paradigmatic knowledge. Theaetetus cited shoemaking "and other *technai*" in his first itemization of knowledge. And even though Socrates dismisses this definition on logical grounds, he replies to it agreeing that shoemaking is (in his words) *epistêmên hupodêmatôn ergasias* "knowledge of working with shoes."⁴¹

What complicates the reference, but also might account for it, is that there was an actual shoemaker known to Socrates who owned a shop at the edge of the Athenian Agora. Evidence exists for this man, Simon, for in the ruins of one shop at Agora's edge archaeologists have discovered ancient hobnails, and a pot or cup on which was scratched part of the word *Simonios* "Simon's, belonging to Simon." This find lends credibility to ancient testimony that Socrates frequented the shop of Simon, and that Simon – on the basis of these many visits – wrote dialogues, before anyone else did, reporting the conversations that Socrates had.⁴²

Plato probably never knew Simon, whom the archaeological evidence suggests to have died during Plato's childhood. He would have heard the stories about him. Phaedo, the title character in one of Plato's best-known dialogues, had made Simon the shoemaker the title character of one of his dialogues, or so we are told. At some point the Socratic philosophers known as the Cynics claimed Simon for one of their own – possibly soon after Socrates died, because the Cynics had begun to meet in the Cynosarges gymnasium around the same time that Plato's circle convened at the Academy. These Cynics forged letters purporting to come from Simon, or to have been written to him by other notable Cynics. According to these letters Simon was a model of the man with parrhêsia "frankness, freedom in speaking" that the Cynics prized so highly. Simon was the unhampered and gladly undistinguished philosopher in that later correspondence, but possibly as early as the first days of Cynicism, when it would have been most likely that associates of Socrates still heard Simon's name. 43

The most specific testimony, although it comes from centuries later when Greek cities belonged to the Roman Empire, agrees on his independent-mindedness and straight talk. Diogenes Laertius recalls him as despising earthly distinction and the company of political leaders; so does an essay that Plutarch wrote on philosophers' relations with rulers. Pericles wanted Simon to serve as his adviser, Plutarch says, but Simon turned the offer down for fear that it would constrain his freedom.

Aside from the fact that he made shoes, there are several reasons to consider Simon the butt of the *Theaetetus*'s remark about cobblers' learning the philosophy of natural change. First, this is the only dialogue that acknowledges the practice of Socratic philosophers' writing dialogues about the master. A number of those who had known Socrates must have produced such dialogues, though only examples by Plato and Xenophon survive in their entirety, and as a rule Plato never lets on that such a genre exists. That is, Plato not only does not refer to dialogues written by other acquaintances of Socrates, his dialogues scarcely acknowledge that they are themselves written works. They present themselves as if transcriptions of conversations, or of someone's monologue within a conversation. (The Athenian Stranger in Plato's *Laws* does propose

that a record of the conversation those men are having takes the place of Homeric epic for children learning to read.⁴⁴ But the discussion in the *Laws* is the only Platonic conversation from which Socrates is absent; anyway the Athenian Stranger does not claim that the written record of their conversation exists, only that it would have pedagogical value if it did.)

The *Theaetetus* offers the only exception to these generalizations, as Chapter 1 already pointed out. Except for the opening dialogue between Eucleides and Terpsion, the *Theaetetus* presents itself as something written down as a faithful record of conversation with Socrates. On top of that, Plato makes Eucleides the Megarian philosopher the one who wrote it. This lone work of Plato's in which people write Socratic conversations might have a reason to nod toward the Socratic acquaintance who initiated that tradition.

The second consideration is Simon's reputation for frank talk and openness. Someone with that reputation is someone you can imagine repeating whatever he heard. The *Theaetetus* merely has its unnamed shoemaker learning the Heraclitean doctrine, but the tenor of that passage, what you might call its fear of the open spread of philosophy, fits specially well with a shoemaker known for speaking openly. If organized schools of philosophy always pass secret teachings along, they are not places for unregulated frank talk.

If Simon had already begun to be associated with Cynicism by the time that Plato wrote the *Theaetetus*, that association would suggest a third reason for the swipe at the shoemaker. The *Theaetetus* is portraying philosophy as an activity housed in schools and perpetuated through traditions. What if the schools that the dialogue has Socrates referring to had counterparts in the time that Plato is writing? The Ephesians may have faded back into obscurity by that later date. Their disorganized condition would seem to promise a speedy end for that school. But taking Simon for the shoemaker who learned from them raises the possibility that in rejecting the Ephesian school Plato would like to do away with Cynicism too.

The Cyrenaics

The suggestion that this proverbial shoemaker stands in for the Cynics becomes more credible if the Ephesians are not the only philosophers with latter-day counterparts. Another school referred to anachronistically by this dialogue might appear in those first words from Socrates about his having no wish to hear about Cyrene or anyone from there. If we ask, as I asked regarding the shoemaker, what actual person this phrase might be referring to – what person Plato is making Socrates dismiss from his mind – the first name that comes to mind, of a philosophy student from Cyrene, is that of Aristippus.

Aristippus was known to Socrates. In fact Xenophon's dialogues have him attempting a cross-examination of Socrates about what is good and what is beautiful. Aristippus does not get far in his attempt to play the Socrates against Socrates, but he is the rare acquaintance on record as having tried.

The other recorded exchange between Aristippus and Socrates, again found in Xenophon, reflects something less rare but no less intimate: Socrates

attempting to turn his interlocutor toward a life of virtue.⁴⁶ This conversation makes Aristippus a committed hedonist, opposed to any effort at self-control. Socrates first argues to him that rulers must be self-controlled, but Aristippus replies that he will live, neither ruling nor ruled, but simply at liberty. Socrates finally offers him a story about the choice of Heracles, a tale attributed to Prodicus about two women personifying vice and virtue.

From Plato there is only chilly near-silence about this acquaintance of Socrates: one mention of his name in all the dialogues, and that one the narrator's remark, early in the *Phaedo*, that Aristippus had not come to see Socrates in prison on the day he died. Aristippus was in Aegina, the *Phaedo* says⁴⁷ – a bit of news that seems designed to block Aristippus's claim to legitimacy as a Socratic. Aristippus came to be known as founder of the Cyrenaic school, the school of philosophy connected with Cyrene, and if he did in fact begin that collective in any organized way then his absence from the prison cell would have been a message not to count the Cyrenaics among the true heirs to Socrates.

Plato is partisan. Aristotle reports a testy conversation between Aristippus and Plato in which (though the language is vague at one crucial point) Aristippus corrects Plato's report about what Socrates said, or perhaps about the manner in which Socrates voiced his opinion. Emotionally the gist of their exchange is clear: Aristippus challenged Plato's place as true Socratic.⁴⁸

The main impediment to our knowledge about Aristippus and the Cyrenaics comes from the fact that he had a grandson, also named Aristippus, who headed the Cyrenaic movement as an adult, a time that would have been well after Plato's death. (It was a Greek habit to name a firstborn son after his father's father.) It is not always clear how substantially the group existed before this second Aristippus reached adulthood. Ancient sources do sometimes confuse the grandfather with his grandson. But Xenophon could not have invented the hedonism of the first Aristippus, because hedonism came to be the central teaching of the Cyrenaics. So something did begin with Aristippus, whether that was a school or a first idea for a school of hedonists.

Cyrenaic hedonism did not last long in antiquity, thanks to the arrival of the Epicurean version of hedonism, which proved more popular and durable. Besides advocating pleasure as such, regardless of its origin, the Cyrenaics are known for their insistence on the present moment. For them it is what happened *just now* that counts. (Recall the "just now" that begins the *Theaetetus*.) Hedonism evolves into a more restrained way of life when it has to incorporate past experiences into its pursuit of pleasure, and even more quickly if it has to consider the future, for then one weighs a pleasure of the present moment against the cost of attaining it, such as the past effort it took to achieve the present pleasure, or against the future penalties that will follow. Chasing pleasure unrestrained then looks much more like traditional self-control. To keep their hedonism from being domesticated by such logic the Cyrenaics recognized only pleasures that existed in the present, which were pleasures in the midst of being experienced.

Besides reporting on the Cyrenaic epistemology of time and their rigorous identification of *eudaimonia* with pleasure, the later sources on this school of thought report anecdotes about Aristippus and witticisms attributed to him. These are mostly what you would expect from a famed hedonist: remarks about prostitutes and clothes, stories of banquets at the court of the Syracusan tyrant. Diogenes Laertius reports a mass of such information, much of it repetitive. But he prefaces the other testimony with the news that Aristippus, despite having studied with Socrates, used to charge his students money.⁵⁰

By itself the mention of the city Cyrene would not go far toward connecting the *Theaetetus* with Aristippus, if it were not for similarities between the Cyrenaic epistemology and positions that this dialogue attributes to Protagoras.⁵¹ In the *Theaetetus*, amid talk of initiates and the uninitiated, Socrates moves from the overt relativism proclaimed in Protagoras's *Truth* to the philosophers he calls *kompsoteroi* "subtler, cleverer." He is not clearly being facetious, inasmuch as the position he then spells out and ascribes to those philosophers contains several levels of perceptible beings. It *sounds* cleverer than a simple account of perception. The subtler philosophers find a constant flux to be at work not only in nature as it exists in its unperceived condition, but also in the perceptual process by means of which human beings arrive at their beliefs about nature. In every act of perception the *homilia* "intercourse, association" and *tripsis* "rubbing" between an active capacity and a passive one creates *ekgona* "offspring" in twins or pairings, a perceptible thing paired with the perception of it.⁵² The perceptual apparatus meets the perceived world in a perpetually renegotiated exchange.

On this theory of perception, what we ordinarily think of as our awareness of objects is the result of an interaction between objective stimulus and subjective perceptivity. Interpretations of this passage in the *Theaetetus* differ, but the claim seems to be that a visible object (the stimulus) rubs against one's power of sight, neither of which is a mental entity, and gives birth to a new couple, the sight of the object and the seeing of that sight. The interaction begins with the constant motion of the two generative causes, stimulus and perceptive power, so the offspring that result cannot be said to exist in any stable sense. New sights and new sightings constantly come into existence. And because the sight and the seeing of it are in flux themselves, scrupulous observers of the world ought to qualify any claims they make about what they seem to know, even to the point of abolishing the verb "to be." ⁵³

The image of perceptions that makes them little babies born when perceivable qualities rub up against perceivers already suggests the Cyrenaics. If the school's founder is going to take himself publicly to prostitutes, the best terminology for his theory of perception may well be language that visualizes sensations as bunnies born in pairs. But a sounder reason to see this passage as a synopsis of Cyrenaic epistemology comes from an anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus* that was written in antiquity. That commentary associates the skeptical relativism being examined in this passage with what the Cyrenaics say about perceptions of external objects.⁵⁴ The historical problem remains that we are uncertain whether Aristippus developed the philosophy in its entirety or his grandson did; but the

commentator's remark does imply that at some point the Cyrenaic analysis of perception as individual and transitory evolved into skepticism regarding external objects. On the skeptical version of the theory, one perceived one's sensations and even perceived them infallibly, but one did not perceive the causes behind those perceptions, i.e. objects outside the body.⁵⁵ The subtler theory that Socrates describes does not contain all these claims but is consistent with them. So far it could be Cyrenaic epistemology under discussion.

The Cyrenaics also make much use of the term *kinêsis* "motion" in explaining perception. It is true that they have a different motion in mind from the one that Socrates is talking about. For the Cyrenaics, if this report is reliable, motion matters specifically to the subjective experiences of pleasure and pain. This section of the *Theaetetus* by contrast makes motion the cause of subjective experience as such. Still the present passage places such great emphasis on the role that motion plays in perception that the *kinêsis* common to both accounts reads as an allusion to the Cyrenaics.

Already in antiquity Cicero distinguished between the Cyrenaic theory and the relativism of Protagoras. Centuries later the early Christian scholar Eusebius did the same.⁵⁷ Their comments are elliptical and focus on what Cicero and Eusebius respectively knew of the historical Protagoras; but modern scholars have been more interested in the different question of whether the Cyrenaics might have been these unnamed cleverer philosophers that Plato calls crypto-Protagorean, philosophers who quite possibly had nothing to do with the real Protagoras. I have been outlining the evidence in favor of that reading. Against it, recent studies press the view that too many metaphysical details differ in the accounts of perception given on the one hand by Cyrenaics, on the other hand by skeptics after Protagoras.⁵⁸ But such an objection assumes a high degree of historical accuracy in Plato. Would he have felt compelled to capture the details of Cyrenaic epistemology? Plato can be inexact and even tendentious when summarizing rival views, and the context of the Theaetetus particularly encourages distortion, given that Socrates is manifestly trying to stuff the majority of existing philosophies into a single capacious sack. In this conversation, with its aim of herding philosophers together, we should not be surprised if some of them go into the herd under misleading descriptions.

Another kind of support for identifying these clever thinkers as Cyrenaics comes from outside the *Theaetetus*. Plato's dialogue *Protagoras* describes its title character in some ways that square with testimony about Aristippus. There is the claim by Diogenes Laertius that Aristippus charged money for lessons before any other Socratic did. As a sophist Protagoras charged tuition and even stood out as the first to have notably high fees.

The *Protagoras* differs from most of Plato's other dialogues in its unwillingness to settle into Socrates-and-interlocutor form: Protagoras and Socrates spend most of their time jockeying for the upper hand, with some of Protagoras's queries to Socrates so difficult he says that he felt like a boxer being pummeled.⁵⁹ This turnabout suggests the scene in Xenophon in which Aristippus likewise tries to question Socrates about the good and the beautiful, likewise

without success.⁶⁰ Finally, the *Protagoras* explores hedonism as no other Platonic work does, examining how well it might function as a general ethical theory. It is Socrates who introduces hedonism into that conversation, not Protagoras, but the dialogue's agenda seems to be to associate the pursuit of pleasure with Protagoras, or at least to make him sympathetic to that theory. And Xenophon again makes clear that Aristippus – the original, the one from Cyrene – advocated the pursuit of pleasure alone.⁶¹

As long as Plato aims at preserving some continuity between the *Theaetetus*'s Protagoras and the one seen in the *Protagoras*, a number of similarities now connect that character with Aristippus and the Cyrenaic school he founded. If this identification does hold, the significance goes beyond historical tidbits that would only interest scholars. Put these references to the Cyrenaic school together with the link to the Cynics that is hinted at in the word "shoemaker," and the overt reference to Eucleides and his Megarian school. Together these allusions give us the uncertain institutional status of Socrates – nowhere in Plato more emphatically presented than in this dialogue that contains the liminal figure of the midwife – set against a specific historical context, itself nowhere in Plato more emphatically presented than here, that being a context in which philosophers situate themselves among their predecessors, and gathered together into schools. On one hand the tricky question, posed as one that is in need of subtle answer – where do we put Socrates, in or outside a school? – on the other hand glimpses everywhere of organized groups of other philosophers, or schools.

Pigs and dogheads

As something of a teacher and also something of an ignoramus, Socrates is given his own secret doctrine. He says he talks to those young men who are "in a way $[p\delta s]$ pregnant." By this he means that they are full to bursting with new ideas but unable to voice those ideas alone. Socrates eases the young men into labor as midwives do with pregnant women, and a new thought comes into existence where none had been. Assuming a successful birth, the young man will know something he had not known earlier, or hadn't known that he knew. In other words this new knowledge had been a secret. So esoteric doctrines are at play in Socratic teaching too, the only difference being that he makes his students reveal the secrets to him.

Indeed, if what marks Socratic midwifery as something other than teaching is his not possessing secret doctrines, his students' articulations of doctrines that had been secret (even unknown to them) is the crucial factor that makes what Socrates does look like teaching again. He teaches as a listener, and he makes himself distinctive by the same act. When true philosophizing has taken place, you can always tell Socrates.

This kind of secret doctrine does not begin with writing. For esoteric reading by Socrates it might be more productive to look again at how he treats the sentence in Protagoras about "man the measure." What if pig is the measure of all things, or the *kunokephalos*, often translated "baboon"?

Whatever epistemology the Cyrenaics advocated, and whenever they developed it, the one sure thesis attributable to that school was a frank hedonism that began with the first Aristippus. It does not take much imagination to see an advocate of such hedonism being called a hus "pig," as Plato has Glaucon call the inhabitant of an uncultured city in Republic Book 2.⁶² And hus "pig" reads even more plausibly as "Cyrenaic" in light of the meaning latent in kunokephalos. That compound word translates literally as "doghead"; but while later authors use the word to apply to some type of ape, probably a baboon in light of that primate's long muzzle, the few appearances of the word before Plato are less decided. A joke about kunokephalos in Aristophanes dates to Plato's childhood but is opaque.⁶³

In Herodotus, whose *Histories* date to around the time Plato was born, the *kunokephalos* appears in a list of odd creatures found in the region that Greeks called "Libya," which could be all of northern Africa west of Egypt. That area is *thêriôdês* "beast-infested." "The super-large snakes are in this area, and lions and elephants, bears and asps, and also donkeys with horns, *kunokephaloi*, and headless men who (as the Libyans say) have their eyes in their chests; and wild men and women." ⁶⁴

This splendid catalogue begins among creatures that the Greeks considered exotic but knew to be real, and proceeds to *hoi akephaloi* "the headless ones," people so implausibly peeking out through their own nipples that even Herodotus clears his throat, that parenthetical phrase "as the Libyans say" being a formula by which, as one commentator says, he "dissociates himself from Libyan animal stories." Between the known snakes and the impossible headless men come the horned asses, with which the list enters wild-tale territory, and after them the dogheads. The increasing freakishness of the list tells against these creatures' being anything as pedestrian as an ape; and the immediately following exhibit, the *akephaloi* "headless ones," then the wild men and women, contribute to the suggestion (though this is not a logical implication) that the *kunokephaloi* are outrageous examples of humanity.

Closer in time to Plato's writing of the *Theaetetus*, the Greek author Ctesias of Cnidus described other far-off *kunokephaloi* in a work, the *Indica*, that no longer exists except for a synopsis in a much later author. The *Indica* summarized natural phenomena of the world east of Persia; Ctesias evidently wrote the work in the early fourth century BC, which puts its date just after the death of Socrates. Our knowledge of this work comes from the Byzantine author Photius, who wrote the surviving encapsulation of it in the ninth century of our era.⁶⁶

When Ctesias speaks of *kunokephaloi*, they do have the heads of dogs, but now we are in the domain of humanoid beings. Though they lack the power of speech, the Indian *kunokephaloi* live in societies, wear simple clothing, and reach stupendous old ages. Ctesias even calls them *dikaioi* "just," and James Romm argues that at minimum they belong in the general public discourse in which Cynicism arose. Maybe, he suggests (as David White also does), they even directly inspired the Cynic movement that by one route or other took its name from the word for "canine." As noble savages, these dogheads represent a

larger movement critical of ordinary society. The Cynics shaped that movement into a new tradition and something like another philosophical school.

This detour now winds back to the schools of Athens, and a new way to read Socrates' maltreatment of Protagoras. The "measure of all things" continues to function as a philosophical text being glossed within a school for the students' private benefit. Only now we can picture rival schools letting their students in on what the sentence really means. The Cyrenaics are as hedonistic as swine, while Cynics by their own admission resemble dogs, and might have taken their inspiration from India's legendary dog-headed people. Therefore: "We the Cyrenaics, we are the arbiters of every question"; or "We the Cynics are." Protagoras has supplied a template that justifies the claim to authority of every other philosophical school. In the guise of an animal joke that has beasts deciding what is true, Socrates' substitution of words turns a claim about humanity into school slogans. Truth inheres in private companies now. A Cyrenaic or Cynic, or even a more *atopos* philosopher, might be the arbiter of what exists.

Is Protagoras (so famous for organizing a school) saying, or giving other philosophers the words to say, that philosophy begins in professionalized schools? When Socrates revises the vulnerable sentence, it works as an allegory for disputes among schools only by also implying that all thinking begins and belongs in schools.

But the fabulizing also reads another way, as Aesop's fables have lions and foxes representing human beings at a cost to those humans, making the humans animalistic by virtue of some incompleteness in their natures. This may be why the Theaetetus contains as many animals as it does, not just the dogheads and pigs but the "donkey" label for losers in a game, and knowledge birds that people keep in their souls on one model of knowledge. The non-human is less than human in these examples (the bird can only represent the human's bit of knowledge if the bird lacks humanity). It is less than human again when Socrates describes the chief philosophers as those who cannot tell whether their neighbors are human and who mistake political leaders for herders of sheep and swine. Theaetetus refuses to believe that colors appear to him as they do to a dog or other animal. He observes that dreamers take themselves to be winged and flying - which would make them either birds or mythic beasts - when they're really lying in bed asleep. And if premature satisfaction with their argument makes Socrates and Theaetetus resemble a bad fighting cock, that is presumably less than what a philosopher ought to be. 67

Stanley Cavell has remarked, regarding the animals populating Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, that they show up by contrast to that book's preoccupation with "the natural history of the human." Cavell takes the range of species represented in the *Investigations* as suggesting "that the human is the animal that is also unnatural (and not only in its epistemology), fated to chronic dissatisfaction with its lot." In the same spirit we might see the *Theaetetus* (one of the few philosophical works identified by name in the *Investigations*) surrounding its philosophers with creatures who lack the knowledge that humans possess and that philosophers seek to understand. Then it follows that the

animals belonging to the Cynic or Cyrenaic school perform some subspecies of measuring out human values. In joining a particular philosophical school they have made themselves no better than part of a philosophizing human being. Philosophy does not live in schools – unless there should come to be one school that does not know itself as one school among many, and is not known as that.

School as institution

The dialogue's depiction of schools and secret teachings still holds if you do not want to accept the pig and doghead as evocations of particular schools. Seeing a school as a collective organized into teachers and students, and then characterized by the transmission of esoteric doctrines across that divide, makes the philosophical school a rebuke to the hope that philosophers can pursue their questions openly, as humans as such, rather than within the constraints that one school or other imposes on their inquiry. And with the threat of philosophical scholasticism comes the temptation to accept philosophy as specialized work.

So it is striking to witness a contrary impulse also at work in Athenian schools, in Plato's time and in the generations after his. Often in the most direct manner imaginable, the schools made philosophers' personal (non-intellectual) virtues the criteria for judging their philosophical legitimacy. One tradition holds that Athens passed a decree honoring the founder of Stoicism and the Stoic school, Zeno of Citium, and ordered the text of this proclamation to be posted on columns in both the Platonic Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. The decree praised Zeno for educating young men in virtue, and for serving as their *paradeigma* "model, example" in his way of living as much as in his philosophizing. Zeno's bios "life" was declared to have matched his *logois*, the speeches or arguments he put forward as a philosopher.

Posting the text of the proclamation in the Academy and Lyceum amounted to declaring Zeno's superiority over any Platonist or Aristotelian – very convenient, from a Stoic's point of view. And the convenience of this story for Stoicism is one reason to doubt the story. But even the act of calling the proclamation into question, as scholars have done, acknowledges the power that personal virtue was recognized to possess, in post-Socratic Athens, as a marker of the good philosopher. The Stoics would only have claimed this tribute falsely for their founder in a climate that made the virtuous *bios* a proof of philosophical merit.⁶⁹

Anecdotes about Plato's own virtue were widely circulated in antiquity. He never laughed outright. He refused to beat a bad slave, because the slave had made him angry. Plato's students did not draw on such stories to justify Plato's governance over the Academy, no doubt because his primacy within that school went without saying. And Plato's nephew Speusippus succeeded him as head of the Academy, so that no real process of succession, no selection of a qualified next leader took place until Speusippus died. But when he did die, the Academy's members elected Xenocrates to lead them next, "admiring as they did his self-control." Xenocrates seems to have been the first head of the school for whom such a justification, in terms of personal excellence, was called for.

Polemo the successor to Xenocrates was the subject of stories about his own temperance, with the twist that Polemo had been a dissolute young man until a lecture by Xenocrates converted him to philosophical temperance.⁷³ The anecdote seems tailor-made to honor the Academy as a whole, not just one scholarch ("head of school") to whom students may have felt loyal, for the conversion of Polemo makes his self-control and his teacher's imply one another. For that matter one tradition credits Plato with having converted Speusippus out of selfindulgence into temperance exactly as Xenocrates would later convert Polemo.⁷⁴

The stories that circulated against the Academy perversely reinforce these advertisements for its leaders inasmuch as they share the values implied by the other stories. Polemo buried money on Academy grounds so he could slip off for a debauch; Plato was a glutton and a plagiarist. 75 Athenaeus reports accusations about power usurped, fortunes amassed through cunning; he says that the comic poet Ephippus says that Plato and his friends dressed ostentatiously. Plato seems to have had clothing on his mind even when reaching for a metaphor for his worldly ambition, because he faced death with the words "I take off my final tunic [chitôn, the male garment worn next to the skin], that of my reputation [doxa], in the midst of death itself." Where the Academy promoted the temperate reputations of its heads, rival schools painted them as intemperate, as Edward Watts's study of "Academic discourse" illustrates, everyone sharing respect for the value of temperance.

Watts does not ask why sôphrosunê "temperance, self-control" should have been the one virtue at stake when Plato's dialogues recognize a set of central virtues: always justice, wisdom, and courage (as also in most later ancient ethical theories), and often piety. The question is magnified by the role played in the slanderous stories by Aristoxenus, an Aristotelian philosopher, who as a member of the Lyceum would have been familiar with the even more extensive set of virtues described by Aristotle.

In fact, Aristoxenus's accusations extended to Socrates himself, and in this case the vices covered the ethical gamut. Socrates lacked justice, wisdom, and courage in addition to being intemperate.⁷⁷ Aristoxenus was evidently not too bashful to charge his targets with other moral failings besides intemperance, and he knew what the other vices were. Nevertheless the Academy's leaders continued to be evaluated, by their detractors as well as their encomiasts, with the sole criterion of temperance. To say, as Watts does, that this virtue emerged in Academic discourse and subsequently invited the slanders it did, is only to invite the question he fails to address: Why not wisdom, which the heads of philosophical schools surely ought to possess? Why not the courage that Socrates so often exhibits in Platonic dialogues? Surely the school administrators after Socrates would have been hard-pressed to match his bravery.

If Plato's Republic may serve as a guide, given its analysis of the primary virtues in both city and soul, it might be relevant that sôphrosunê is called the virtue found in all the classes of a good city. Wisdom resides in the ruling class, courage among the soldiers; but when he turns to temperance Socrates explains it as something extended through the entire populace.⁷⁸ In that case, what distinguishes a head of the Academy is his possession of a virtue that all human beings ought to have. He becomes a standout among philosophers by embodying the restraint appropriate to everyone everywhere.

A different consideration brings us to a very similar reason for foregrounding temperance. Despite Socrates' general presentation as man of virtue and special mention of his *sôphrosunê*, the moment in Plato when he is closest to crazy or crazed must be in the *Charmides*, that examination of temperance or self-control that finds Socrates taking pains not to lose his own. "I saw what was inside his cloak [himation] and I burst into flame and no longer contained myself." This is what a maddened Socrates would look like and not for example someone overcome by cowardice, or madly unjust; absolutely not an impious man. By being temperate, therefore, the scholarchs of the early Academy resemble a Socrates without the one kind of madness he had. The Platonic Socrates is a Socrates made sane.

Above all what matters to the early Academy is that its heads presented themselves as virtuous men, or let their associates present them as virtuous, where the virtue served as a necessary qualification for the scholarch's position. At times it even seems to be the only qualification. The philosopher achieves his standing as that particular kind of person by living up to the standard to which everyone else is held.

The demand for outstanding virtue simultaneously imposes too high a standard on philosophers and asks too little, or nothing special, of them. This is one way to see that something peculiar is afoot – a peculiarity that modern readers only obscure if we respond to the stories of the temperate philosophers with either progressivist or nostalgic narratives, i.e. either "We don't do that old-fashioned nonsense any more (how far we've come)" or "We'd be well served to have such expectations today (how far we've fallen)."

As far as temperate philosophers go, the question is not what it would indicate today that philosophers exhibit that virtue or fail to, but what the trait meant to show in the days of the early Athenian schools. The standard appears too exacting if it never gives philosophers a moment's relief. Everyone else puts professional ethics aside when work is over, but the philosopher is always on the job and constantly demonstrating what has been declared to be professional expertise.

And yet the expectation feels like nothing specific, nothing that would set one philosopher apart from another. Aristotle will look for virtue in the function performed by human beings apart from, or more fundamentally than, what professionals do in their vocations. "Can it be," he asks rhetorically, "that there are certain functions [erga] and acts [praxeis] for a carpenter and shoemaker and none for a human being, that the human rather was born to be argon?" – idle, or fallow as land is. What the human can do qua human and that constitutes virtue is always something less than, and something presupposed by, what the practitioner of a profession or technê does. But then the emphasis on personal virtue seems to make things too easy on philosophers. Everyone should be

acting with virtue. Is it only for a philosopher that this is enough as professional qualification, as if otherwise he really had been born to lie fallow?

This moment, amid the proliferation of philosophical schools, forces on philosophers the difficulty of conceiving what they do as a specialization, one sign of the difficulty being that the task appears both impossibly too much and nowhere near enough. (The closing chapter of this book will observe that Kierkegaard sees Christian life in monasteries as similarly excessive and inadequate both at once.) Their special status requires that philosophers be, and excel as examples of, ordinary humans. When philosophy acquires a marker - the school that it takes place in, the tradition it belongs to - it feels the need to reaffirm its role in the lives of human beings understood generically.

As virtue goes, so goes that narrowed and complex intellectual virtue that is the domain of logic. Logic has always belonged in philosophy, though philosophers are the first to insist that logic does not belong to them – that if logic has any worth in philosophy, its worth derives from logic's applicability to all thinking, philosophical and unphilosophical alike. In mastering and codifying logic, philosophers understand themselves to be practicing in a self-conscious and undistracted way what every sensible person does unconsciously, when thinking about something else (in order to be thinking about something else). As a logician too then the philosopher is both generically and supremely human.

(It may be more than a coincidence that philosophers' occupation with logic has worked as a corrective against the temptation to appear as seers and mystics. For a long time, as Nietzsche says, "philosophy on earth would not have been possible without an ascetic wrapping and garment [ohne eine asketische Hülle und Einkleidung." So it happened that philosophers began by costuming themselves in priestly vestments. But soon enough that disguise needed to be modified until no priestliness remained.⁸¹)

Conclusion

We finish with the image that began this chapter, of a Socrates ambiguous between an atopos creature and a schoolteacher in a stable place. To resolve the problem would force philosophers into a choice that few of them are able to make, between oddity and organization man. Do you have to be one or the other? To refuse the terms of this choice the philosopher aspires toward some idea of general humanity, as long as that humanity is understood in some exemplary way, and bearing in mind that virtuous humanity can look like organization-man conformity under certain circumstances, while under other circumstances it will resemble eccentricity.

In the centuries after Socrates, philosophers became a less surprising sight around the eastern Mediterranean, probably less surprising to themselves as well as to others. Hellenistic and Roman statues came to depict intellectuals according to familiar codes, as Paul Zanker has shown in compelling detail in The Mask of Socrates. One tradition emerged for depicting the poet, another for the rhetorician, and a pair of philosopher portraits, depending whether you want the long

full beard (unfashionable after Alexander) of the respectable philosopher – the mark of the philosopher for Horace – or the facial scraggle of the unkempt Cynic, matching his rough cloak and bare feet.⁸²

The Cynic has already threatened to enter the *Theaetetus*. The dialogue's images of philosophy at work will provide him with more opportunities to insinuate himself alongside those portrayals that represent respectable philosophy. The Cynic will oppose the philosopher's place in the gymnasium – which philosophy will use as a metaphor, but not only a metaphor – with the frank protruding belly that tells the viewer he scorns this fuss over his physique. ⁸³ If it is not always clear when "the philosopher" is a Platonic heir to Socrates at home in the Academy, or that other kind of Socratic who has no home, that potential for confusion between the two types points to a difficulty already visible in the *Theaetetus*, between telling Socrates the oddball from Socrates the teacher.

At stake is philosophy's capacity to see itself as the exemplification of what is broadly human and thereby a concentrated version of what everyone does already. If anyone can begin among laws and citizens and move on to ask about justice, then no uniform will show which person is the philosopher. A proper *teacher* of philosophy might possess secret doctrines to be communicated only among members of the school; and this only shows that the teacher can't be known by his sayings. The philosophers in the *Theaetetus* who circulate their theses publicly, the Ephesians, apparently make a later appearance as Cynics, again carrying with them the identifying mark of the philosopher.

In the Athenian democracy, so scrupulous in acknowledging the appearances of the democratic ethos, statues of philosophers (like statues of poets) could only portray them as citizens. Let me suggest that philosophy carries forward this need not to differentiate itself (among other needs, to be sure), *not* because its birth as institution within the Athenian democracy imparted this code of citizen equality to philosophy in later, even Imperial times, but because something about philosophy's image of itself could only have found its first full expression in a city like Athens, famous not only for its democratic procedures but also for a culture of democracy.

What portrayal suits the outstandingly typical human? The friends and other followers of Socrates might even agree that he fit that description perfectly, and that it would only require an accurate depiction of Socrates to capture what the philosopher is. But the *Theaetetus* ends with Socrates heading off to begin the legal process that will continue with his trial. This same dialogue began with Theaetetus, the one person said to look like Socrates (the only one described anywhere in Plato as resembling Socrates), leaving camp with dysentery. Everyone who reads the written inner dialogue knows the trial will end with the death of Socrates, and the framing dialogue finds death shortly ahead of Theaetetus. The question of portraying philosophy, so close to the problem of perpetuating the subject, did not come up in fun or as a clever puzzle "Where do philosophers come from?" With Socrates gone, and also the only man who ever looked like him, how will you identify the philosopher again? Where to look?

Notes

- 1 Pl.: city and soul, Rep. 2.368d-e; write only notes, Phdr. 276d.
- 2 Pl. Ap. 26d.
- 3 Pl. Phd.: frame removed from events in time and space, 57a; friends present (Plato absent), 59b-c.
- 4 Pl. Phd. 97b-99c.
- 5 See Sedley 2007 for a reconstruction of Anaxagoras's cosmology (8–26) and the argument that the *Phaedo* is a willful misstatement of that theory (86–88).
- 6 Pl. Phd. 99c.
- 7 Protagoras as teacher: Pl. *Prt.* 317b, 318a, 318d, 349a; Steph. Byz. "Abdera"; Diog. Laert. 9.53, 9.56 (on his fees). Protagoras as theorist of teaching: "One must begin," *Anecd. Bach. Par.*, p. 171, l. 31; "Teaching requires," ibid.; "Protagoras used to say," Stob. 3.29.80; see also "Plut." *Train.* 178.25.
- 8 Pl. Tht.: Protagoras teaching, 152a-d; secret doctrines, 152c, 156c; alleged theory of education, 167a; relativism and being a teacher, 161d-e.
- 9 Pl. Tht. 161d-e.
- 10 Pl. Tht.: midwifing technê, 161e; Protagoras calls Socrates teacher, 168a.
- 11 Socrates claiming not to teach: Pl. *Ap.* 19d, 31a-b, 33a-b; *Euthphr.* 3d; Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.6–7. See Blank 1985, Nehamas 1992, Vlastos 1985.
- 12 Pl. Tht. 152d-e.
- 13 Pl. Tht. 152e.
- 14 Pl. *Tht*.: watch out for *tis tôn amuêtôn* "anyone uninitiated," 155e; others, i.e. students of Protagoras, have *mustêria* "the mysteries," 156a.
- 15 Pl. Tht. 179d.
- 16 Pl. *Tht.*: Ephesians reply with another cryptic remark, 179e–180a; shoot answers and you'll be hit, 180a; "battle exceedingly," 180b.
- 17 Pl. *Tht.*: tradition an army, 153a; should be "brought together," 152e; philosophers' chorus, 173b, c.
- 18 Pl. *Tht.* 173c. A *koruphaios* can be a political leader, as in Herodotus when Darius says every oligarch in an oligarchy wants to be *koruphaios*, Herod. 3.82; for its sense as choral leader in tragedy see Arist. *Pol.* 1277a11.
- 19 It is hard to say whether to count the *lampadedromia* "torch race" among team or individual sports. The horseback race at Pl. *Rep.* 1.328a sounds like a relay race between competing teams (and see Herod. 8.98.2). But these, while taking place regularly at festivals, were not included at any of the major Games, and therefore may not have been thought of as athletics. Pausanias (Paus. 1.30.2) speaks of a torch race run from the Academy itself to the city, but as he describes that event it sounds like a competition among individual runners.
- 20 Philosophers like ball players, Pl. *Tht.* 146a; this game *ostrakinda*, Freeman 1936: 29; on *ostrakinda* Pollux *Onomasticon* 9.111–112; philosophy as tug-of-war, Pl. *Tht.* 181a.
- 21 Pl. Tht. 180b.
- 22 Pl. Tht. 172d, 175e, 187d.
- 23 Arist. Pol. 5.1313b2–3. Diog. Laert. 5.37 says a letter from Aristotle's student Theophrastus likewise used scholastikos to refer to scholars.
- 24 Pl. Tht. 180c; cf. Rep. 7.520b.
- 25 See Blank (1985) for comments on Socratic free speech.
- 26 Pl. Rep.: dialectic not for the young, 7.537e–539c; Grg.: Callicles and Mysteries, 497c. See Farrell 1999 on how persistently the dialogues use Eleusinian mysteries as their model for philosophical education. Pl. L7: withholding major doctrines from new students, 340c–d.
- On this pedagogical predicament see, recently, Stanley Cavell on refusing to allow students in his Wittgenstein courses to write papers concentrating on Wittgenstein's "meta-philosophical remarks": Cavell et al. 2001: 92–93.

- 28 On the Derveni Papyrus generally see Most 1997; also Janko 2001, Sider 1997.
- 29 Thus Most (1997) compares the Derveni author to a modern Christian who tries to make Genesis compatible to geology and biology.
- Derveni Papyrus: its attention to teaching, col. 10; "say' and 'teach' have the same sense," Janko 2001: 22; quotes Heraclitus, col. 4, Janko 2001: 19 (quotes from Heraclitus are those standardly numbered B3, B94). On the Derveni author as follower of Heraclitus see Sider 1997, Janko 2001: 19n75; Heraclitus hierologos may not mean "allegorist" as Janko translates the word, and see objections at Henrichs 2003: 207–216. But Henrichs (2003: 230, 230n72) goes out of his way to connect a hieros logos with secrets for the initiate. Derveni Papyrus: "Ocean" meaning air, col. 23; Orpheus and ainigma "riddle," col. 13, and see Most 1997: 123, 128, and Henry 1986: 155–156; open quality of this interpretation, Funghi 1997: 29.
- 31 Pl. Tht. 152a.
- 32 Pl. Tht. 152c; see 161d-e on Protagoras's speaking with the vulgar.
- 33 Pl. Tht.: real version of book that Protagoras wrote, 152d; "hidden truth," 155d.
- 34 Pl. Tht.: wondered over the beginning, 161c; the measure is pig or doghead, 161c.
- 35 Pl. Phdr. 275c.
- 36 Socrates reading Simonides, Pl. *Prt.* 338e–348a, and see Pappas 1989; Socrates and funeral speech, Pl. *Menex.*, see also Pappas and Zelcer 2013, 2015, Pappas 2011; on *Prt.* as ironic see e.g. Ledbetter 2003: 104–107; on *Menex.* as parody Clavaud 1980, more recently Long 2003, Salkever 1993.
- 37 Pl. *Tht.* 152e. Ocean as water, Arist. *Metaph.* 1.983b30–31. Aristotle revisits the same Homeric verse but considers it as an anticipation of Thales not of Heraclitus. So equating Ocean with natural flux was not necessarily more plausible in antiquity than it is now.
- 38 Pl. Tht. 180d.
- 39 Her.: sought for myself, B101, quoted in Diog. Laert. 9.5, and Plut. Adv. Col. 20, 1118c; polymathy, B40, in Ath. 610b.
- 40 Pl. Rep. 6.495d–496a; see Roberts (1994: 85–86) who draws attention to this often-overlooked passage.
- 41 Pl. Tht. 146d.
- 42 Simon the shoemaker: Diog. Laert. 2.122 on Simon, whom Phaedo made into the title character of a dialogue, and who first wrote Socratic dialogues; archaeological evidence, Thompson 1960. See Hock 1976, Sellars 2003.
- 43 Simon's frankness, etc.: forged Cynics' letters, *Socraticorum epistulae* 8, 9.1, 12, in Malherbe 1977; Simon and Cynics, Hock 1976: 46–48; Simon's contempt for political leaders and preference for personal freedom, Diog. Laert. 2.123, and see Plut. *Mor.* 776b ("Regarding the Fact that the Philosopher Most of All Should Discourse with Rulers"); probably never met Plato, Sellars 2003: 208n8.
- 44 Pl. Laws 7.811c-e.
- 45 Xen. Mem. 3.8.
- 46 Xen. Mem. 1.2.
- 47 Pl. Phd. 59c.
- 48 Arist. Rh. 1398b30–33; see Irwin 1991: 80n9.
- 49 See e.g. Diog. Laert. 2.89–90 on differences between Cyrenaics and Epicureans. On the groping or feeling quality of Cyrenaic epistemology and hedonism see ibid. 2.66; cf. Sext. *Math.* 7.191.
- 50 Diog. Laert. 2.65–93; on payment, ibid. 2.65, also 2.72, 2.82.
- An early version of the proposal that this "subtler" view is the Cyrenaic theory appears in Schleiermacher, *Platons Werke*, II.1, p. 183; see Mondolfo 1953.
- 52 Pl. Tht.: cleverer philosophers, 155e–156a; perceptual process, 156a–b.
- 53 Pl. Tht. 157a.
- 54 Anonymous commentary, col. 65.29–39.

- 55 Thus Diog. Laert. 2.92; Sext. Pyr. 1.215, Math. 7.195. On the Cyrenaics and skepticism regarding external objects see Irwin 1991: 62; O'Keefe 2013. For ancient sources and testimonia, Tsouna 2004: 143-160.
- 56 Diog. Laert. 2.85, Euseb. Praep. evang. 14.18.31.
- 57 Cic. Luc. 142, Euseb. Praep. evang. 14.2.4–7; both in Tsouna 2004: 124.
- 58 Schleiermacher, Grote, and Zeller identified the kompsoteroi with Aristippus and early Cyrenaics. More recently Zilioli (2012, 2013) defends the identification. For contrary arguments see O'Keefe 2013, Tsouna 2004: 124–137. In conversation George Boys-Stones asked me why Eucleides the Megarian would have written up this dialogue if it were really about the Cyrenaics. I would answer: to emphasize that time has passed and the Socratics have collected into schools; though anyway the Cyrenaics are only one band of anti-Eleatics against whom the Parmenides sympathizers at Megara would have argued.
- 59 Pl. Prt. 339e.
- 60 Xen. Mem. 3.8.
- 61 Pl. Prt.: Socrates introduces hedonism, 351b; Xen. Mem.: Aristippus defends hedonism, 2.1. Against this reading see Irwin 1991: 57, which emphasizes the difference between hedonism expounded in the *Protagoras* and the "Cyrenaic hedonism of the present."
- 62 Pl. Rep. 2.372d.
- 63 "You have a dog's nature, and you dare to fight a kunokephalos [like me]?" Ar. Eq. 416. Why shouldn't a dog fight a baboon? As a play on words – dog takes on top dog – the line has some point but not much wit.
- 64 Herod.: Libya beast-infested, 4.191.3; snakes, kunikephaloi, etc., 4.191.4.
- 65 Lateiner 1989: 72.
- 66 Romm (1996) treats Ctesias's *Indica* in connection with Cynicism.
- 67 Pl. Tht.: knowledge birds, 197c–200c; philosopher ignorant about neighbors, 174b; mistakes leaders for herders, 174d; Theaetetus on colors, 154a; dreamers flying, 158a-b; Socrates and Theaetetus like fighting cock, 164c.
- 68 Cavell 2006: 22.
- 69 The report of the decree and its posting appears in Diog. Laert. 7.10–12; on reasons for doubting it, and on its implications about other schools, see Haake 2004. Also see Habicht 1994 on this decree in the larger context of the philosophical schools' political existence in Athens.
- 70 The tales are collected in Riginos 1976.
- 71 Never laughed, Diog. Laert. 3.26; not beating slave, Riginos 1976: 155–156.
- 72 Phld. *IE* 6–7; quoted in Watts 2007: 115.
- 73 Watts 2007: 117; see Diog. Laert. 4.17–18.
- 74 See Watts 2007: 118; Plut. De frat. amor. 491f-492a.
- 75 Accusations against Polemo seem to trace back to Antigonus; they are found in Diog. Laert. 4.16, 4.17. On Plato the glutton, see Hermippus in ibid. 3.2; Hermippus again, quoted in ibid. 8.85, on plagiarism; the slanders collected in Riginos 1976: 99, 113–115. See Watts 2007: 118–120.
- 76 Ath.: slanders, 11.116–119 507a–509b; ostentatious dress, 11.120 509b–e; "final tunic," 11.116 507d.
- 77 Watts 2007: 121. The fragments of Aristoxenus are collected in Wehrli 1945: vol. 2.
- 78 Pl. Rep. 4.431e–432a. Justice too has to exist among all citizens in the new city, but Republic 4 presents justice as something of a meta-virtue encompassing all the others. Temperance shows itself to more immediate scrutiny.
- 79 Pl.: "if you open Socrates up you have no idea how full he is of sôphrosunê," Sym. 216d; "I saw what was inside his cloak," Chrm. 155d.
- 80 Arist. Eth. Nic. I.7.1097b28-30.
- 81 Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, Essay III, §10; translation my own. On this transition from philosopher as priestly figure to the new representation of the logical philosopher see also Vernant 1982.

- 72 Socrates in the Theaetetus
- 82 Zanker 1995: respectable philosopher, 108–109; Cynic, e.g. 129. Mark of the philosopher for Horace, Mayer 1986: 55.
- 83 Zanker 1995: 178.
- 84 Zanker 1995: 43.

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3 Philosophy's first citizen

Thus far the philosopher has been seen as someone either in or not in one school or other. As the first half of the *Theaetetus* continues to unfold, it generalizes beyond questions about the schools of Athens and Megara to ask where the philosopher belongs in the Greek city as such, or in the world that contains that city. Three new occasions for defining philosophers situate those characters in the Athenian gymnasium, among Greek mythological cosmogonies, and then ultimately in an unresolved tension with their putative biological home, the human species.

In two places this dialogue's participants refer to its setting in a gymnasium with a comparison between philosophical dialectic and naked wrestling. In several other passages the philosopher's business enters a mythical context: the myth of Ocean the world's progenitor that has already been touched on; also another figure, Iris the gods' messenger, goddess of the rainbow, who slips across the conversation as a metaphor for philosophy that is partly explained and partly left opaque.

And then at the heart of the *Theaetetus*, with the end of its first half, comes a long speech by Socrates that he himself tries to shrug away as digression and off point, no more than hors d'oeuvre or *amuse-bouche* to philosophy. Off subject or on, this passage known as the *parergon* delivers one of the most memorable portrayals of the philosopher to be found in any dialogue. As other passages in Plato do – but none of them this absolutely – the digression puts the philosopher on the path toward divine status, becoming "like god," with consequences, as the dialogue itself observes, for how such a godly figure will now regard the mere humans who live around him.

Wrestling and civilization

Soon after Socrates has mocked Protagoras imagining pigs and dogheads as the arbiters of truth, he asks old Theodorus to join him in pronouncing relativism defeated. Theodorus does not want to administer the *coup de grâce*. For all his failings Protagoras had been his friend. And yet Theodorus is not willing to deny the truth of Socrates' argument. "So grab hold [*labe*] of Theaetetus again," he says.¹

The imperative labe "grab, take" simply means that Socrates should engage in dialectic with Theaetetus. But the metaphor seems to inspire Socrates. Now philosophy looks like the act of grabbing, not in the sense of being seized by a question but as a matter of getting yourself to take hold of it. "Supposing you went to the wrestling rooms [tas palaistras] in Sparta," Socrates says; "would you consider it right to look at others naked – some of them a poor sight – but yourself not stripping to show your form in turn?" Theodorus says it would be all right with him, as long as the Spartans consented. He contrasts himself stiff with age to Theaetetus, younger and hugroteros "more fluid, pliant, flexible." Socrates should wrestle with the kid.²

Plato's dialogues do sometimes drop a line reminding their readers of the conversation's setting: that Socrates and the other characters are walking or sitting at dinner. These can read awkwardly. Early in the Republic Socrates says "it was summer," even though he is supposedly recalling that conversation the day after it took place. In the *Phaedrus* he comments on the place he and Phaedrus have come to sit with an unnaturalness that Plato is rarely guilty of. ("This tree above us is tall," etc.³)

But then instead of awkwardness you can see self-consciousness in "it was summer," and a nod to Plato's reader that says, "This is not after all a monologue you are eavesdropping on the next day, but a composed document written decades later and now being read indefinitely later than it was written." The staginess in the *Phaedrus* points ahead within that dialogue to the reappearance of these same elements - sloping land, grass, heat and cooling – in the myth that Socrates tells.⁴ Pay attention, reader! (This move from apparent solecism to rebuke to the reader occurs sometimes in Nabokov.) Likewise the *Theaetetus*'s mentions of the gymnasium, appearing as they do within a document that is presented as a written work, remind readers that they all belong to a time after Socrates, when they are forced to remember him by reading.

The time after Socrates finds philosophers belonging to schools, therefore gathering in gymnasia officially. If Socrates is gone, his heirs are still philosophizing as he once had done.

For a modern reader the talk of stripping to philosophize may sound exotic or titillating, but there are better reasons than titillation for stopping to look at the scene. That the meaning of stripping to wrestle, as philosophical practice, should come up among these people when the status of philosophy is at stake, is a prod – or anyway I feel prodded – to ask what could follow about identifying philosophers.

"Because of the tyranny they live under, this [male erotic love] is base to barbarians, as are philosophy and habitual exercise," Plato's character Pausanias says in the Symposium, speaking as lay sociologist.⁵ So the Greeks, or the ones like Plato's Pausanias, saw themselves as pederastic, philosophical, and athletic, and were content to be seen that way. Are these three discrete facts about the culture, that the men spent time exercising and philosophized and pursued specifically structured love affairs with teenagers? If not, if something beyond constant conjunction links Greek philosophical culture with its gymnasium culture, how do we spell out the true causal connection?

Some Greek writers before Plato expect the two cultures to conflict, with only one of the two able to win. The cultural critic of archaic Greece, Xenophanes (who probably died a little before Socrates was born), is famous for refusing to believe that gods could take human form. But he sounds equally incredulous about the gifts and glory that Greeks shower on Olympic victors. It is not right to rank mere *rhômê* "strength" above good or beneficial wisdom, he says.⁶ The two values seem to be at odds. The terms of the debate are familiar to a modern audience, fame for athletes pitted against the recognition that other achievements ought to receive, and above all the intellectual ones.

According to Athenaeus, who quotes these verses of complaint, Euripides echoed the same sentiment in *Autolycus*.⁷ For that matter Socrates seems to assume some competition between philosophy and athletics at his trial (on Plato's version of it), when he proposes that Athens feed him nightly dinners for life, as it fed Olympic champions, in light of the benefit he conferred upon the city, far greater than theirs.⁸

Such comments imply that if the Greeks do characteristically philosophize and characteristically frequent the gymnasium, these activities are incompatible. The Greeks will have to choose which one to do. This is the point of a saying attributed to Pythagoras about life's being like an athletic event: "some go to compete, some for business, but the best as spectators." In life as at the games, some people are "slaves" born to chase after glory and excess, while the best – the philosophers – desire to know.

If it has to be one or the other, philosophy or athletics, then philosophical schools at a gymnasium function as an act of occupation, subverting the meaning of the place, as when a triumphant religion takes over the temples that had been sacred to the religion now defeated. But that does not seem to have been Pausanias's point in the *Symposium*, when he finds Greeks engaged in both activities. And aside from Socrates' remark at his trial, the Platonic dialogues more typically see philosophizing as the extension and completion of physical exercise rather than as its rival.

First there are the athletic metaphors that Plato uses for philosophy, which point to a kinship between the two uses of gymnasia. Talk of wrestling in the *Theaetetus* might seem unremarkable, given the setting; likewise the plentiful references to philosophy as wrestling in the *Lysis*, which is set in a *palaistra*. But wrestling is synecdoche for education again in dialogues set in private homes, or on the open road.¹⁰

Competitive struggle is the feature common to wrestling and philosophical exchange that most of those metaphors appeal to. When Socrates rebukes Theodorus for wanting to stand and watch, his analogy has the same point. Win or lose but get in there and philosophize; he will not let Theodorus philosophize by watching as that other geometer Pythagoras did. And rejecting the Pythagorean metaphor means rejecting the assumption behind it that philosophy and athletic participation spring from different impulses. Philosophers no longer

observe their fellow humans engaged in life's interactions, as visitors to the games might do, for now they belong in the center of the action and on display. Knowing what human life consists in is itself one of those activities in which human beings can entangle themselves.

The boxing metaphors in Plato's *Protagoras* have the same effect: Socrates faces off against the grand sophist. That dialogue's point is that Socratic philosophy can confront the sophistry of Protagoras on its own terms and defeat it. So Socrates (who is narrating) speaks of the conversation as a boxing match. Their debate has ground rules and a referee, and heavy blows get landed.¹¹

Other dialogues, still treating athletics as emblems of competition, use more generic language. But the most explicit of the generic analogies to sports do not make competition the common ground. The thought seems to be more globally that body and mind each have their own excellent condition, and each excellent condition comes of training. Hippias speaks of himself as some sort of participant in the Olympics, and Socrates thereupon compares him to "athletes of the body," as if there were another kind – as if mental exploits were already routinely grouped with sports. "I would marvel if one of the athletes of the body [tôn peri to sôma athlêtôn] arrived at the games so fearless and confident in his body as you are about your intelligence, mind [dianoiai]." Plato's Parmenides even imagines the metaphor as an old one, with the philosopher Parmenides advising twentyyear-old Socrates to seek gumnasia or training in the methods of dialectical reasoning. Aristotle takes over this sense of dialectic as gumnastikê in Topics 1.2 and elsewhere in that work. 13 He evidently means by exercise or training as we do – by contrast with practice, rehearsal, habituation – not the performance of a task in the interests of performing that same task smoothly, but the performance of one task in order to be able to perform other tasks better, presumably because the mind or body does everything better after a workout.

The act of putting mental accomplishments alongside the body's athletics suggests a formulation that appears, in Athenian letters, around the time that Plato wrote the *Theaetetus*, although the formulation comes not from Plato but from his contemporary and rival schoolmaster Isocrates. Isocrates, claiming the right to the word *philosophia* for what his school taught, flatly equated this with *gumnastikê*. Human nature is composed of body and soul, Isocrates says. Accordingly "some of our ancestors ... discovered two pursuits: training for the body of which gymnastics [gumnastikê] is a part, and philosophy for the soul." As he says in the same speech, the education he offers is a gumnasian tês psuchês, a workout for the soul.¹⁴

So philosophers do not come to the gymnasium to reform and replace it as Xenophanes and Autolycus had wanted to do, but to use it as intended, doing more of the same kind of thing. When Paul, in 1 Corinthians, compares the Christian's spiritual exercise to an athlete's discipline ("Run so as to win," he urges), the spiritual becomes the true exercise. By contrast with Christians, athletes merely pursue a "perishable crown." On Paul's formulation, literal competition comes to look like the inadequate precursor to what can now be done right. As the Athenians had begun to interpret their own culture, in

Plato's adult lifetime, the parallel between two ways of training presumed and continued the pursuit of bodily exercise.

Hence the philosopher's constant presence at the gymnasium, to represent this culture even more perfectly than the athlete did, by exercising with athletes while exercising the dialectic – or really to exercise philosophical dialectic because of the exercise alongside athletes of the body.

The *Republic* takes the point further (maybe intending a slap at Isocrates), denying that gymnastic training belongs to the body *as opposed to* the soul; all training trains the soul. Greek physical culture has been trying to become philosophical culture all along. Even when seeming to be engaged in a strange new activity, the philosopher is practicing in highest form what free Athenian citizens have been doing for centuries.

Where the wrestling happens

Socrates speaks of stripping to wrestle because stripping naked is the civilized Greek's prerequisite for exercise. The *gumnasion* "gymnasium" and the *gumnastikê* "gymnastics, exercise" that took place there, both get their names from *gumnos* "naked, nude." The nudity of Greek athletics is well known and does not need to be dwelt on right at this moment, though it will be dwelt on plentifully soon enough. But notice the reference to "being in Lakedaimonia," the name for Sparta that Socrates chooses to use when asking what Theodorus would do if he found himself in a Spartan wrestling room.

Socrates openly sympathized with the Spartan regime, but that fact will not illuminate his reference. The allusion only makes sense if it has a point any Greek would understand. The point is partly that, as the city that other Greeks viewed as paradigmatically Greek, Sparta was considered an origin of gymnasium nudity; and additionally that Sparta was a place of law. Before the battle of Thermopylae, Xerxes was warned that "law is their lord"; and the "Go tell the Spartans" inscription that speaks on behalf of the 300 killed in that battle calls them obedient to their fellow citizens' *rhêmasi* "commands." Even Pericles, who led Athens into war against Sparta, acknowledged the enemy's adherence to law in his funeral speech celebrating Athens. He merely tried to make Spartan lawfulness sound undesirable, accusing the Spartans of passing their lives in a wearisome discipline from which Athenians were happily free. ¹⁸

When Theodorus returns to the Socratic simile, he relocates the wrestling so that it no longer evokes lawful civilization. This is no Spartan wrestling! "You seem to me more like Skiron," Theodorus says. The Spartans let a man either strip or leave, as you might expect from a law-abiding populace. "But to me," he tell Socrates, "you seem more as if you're acting the part of Antaeus. For you don't let the person who comes up to you leave until you forced them to strip and wrestle in words." 19

Socrates accepts the new comparison, not even grudgingly. He says Theodorus has identified his *nosos* "disease," his "mighty love" for the exercise that is philosophical conversation. When it comes to talking philosophy Socrates can't

be controlled any more than the outlaws Antaeus and Skiron could be. But where one encounter with Heracles was the end of Antaeus, and Athenian legend credited Theseus with killing Skiron, Socrates casts himself as a more persistent threat than either of them. "Thousands of Heracleses and Theseuses powerful at speaking have already chanced upon me and beaten me into pieces, but I still don't retreat." Needless to say he is not picturing himself as a midwife here, unless that is a new intellectual kind of midwife who gets into fights with mothers in labor.

But just because Socrates finds the revision of the metaphor congenial does not make it any less striking, or any less in need of being thought through, that Plato did not let his own metaphor stay where it was but returned to exchange it for another. Wrestling has gone from a practice at home in a law-abiding city to deadly battle in the wild. What else has to be true about philosophizing together to leave the activity open to both descriptions?

It almost domesticates Antaeus and Skiron to call them "highway robbers," as some sources do. Highway robbers do lurk on unpoliced stretches of road, but their robbery presupposes the existence of an established state whose reach has limits. The highway robber waits for a traveler to venture out from civilized lands. By comparison the banditry of Skiron in Attica — where he was joined by Procrustes and Cercyon — and of Antaeus in northern Africa represents a condition before civilization. Although some versions of the myths about them put Skiron and Antaeus merely outside of cities, implying that civilization has established itself already, the heroes who defeat these figures actually make civilization possible.

When Heracles killed Antaeus, for example (holding him up off the earth to weaken this child of natural forces), he freed the area, known as Irasa, where the Greeks would later come and found Cyrene. So Heracles prepared the land for a civilizing influence, as that child of Cyrene Theodorus ought to know.²¹

In the story of Theseus, he was on his way to Athens, then governed by his father, when he encountered Skiron, Procrustes, and Cercyon. That would make him heir to the throne arriving in a civilized place. But in the Athens of Socrates and Plato, Theseus had been declared the cause of the original "synoecism" of Athens, the one who united scattered villages and towns into a *polis* that had not previously existed.²² For a contemporary of Socrates, if Athens had had a founder it could only have been Theseus.

Where Procrustes stretched and hacked passers-by on his bed of torment, Skiron abused the tradition of the hospitable footbath. He forced those who came traveling along his high cliff to bend and wash his feet, and as they washed Skiron gave a kick that sent them down into the sea. Theseus threw Skiron down to the same fate he had inflicted on others, and generally defeated all the predators with a tit-for-tat out of fairy tales, subjecting them to the tortures they had inflicted on travelers.

Plutarch, who tells these stories in his *Life of Theseus*, draws attention to the rough reciprocation at work. "He did these things imitating Heracles, for he [Heracles] repaid those who first attacked him by the means they had planned to subject him to … and outwrestled [*katepalaise*] Antaeus."²³

Cercyon was the wrestler along the way to what would later be Athens. Plutarch uses the same verb in describing his fate that he'd used about Heracles and Antaeus. Theseus *katapalaisas aneile* "killed him by outwrestling him," as if the sport had existed before Theseus. But Plato in another dialogue, the *Laws*, accuses Antaeus and Cercyon of thuggish wrestling, leg holds and other moves designed to bring victory at the cost of grace and exercise. To defeat them is not to outdo them at the same activity, because outdoing thugs at their own game would leave Heracles and Theseus looking like brutes themselves. Instead the right victory required that the heroes beat the bandits at a skillful new version of their own game. Accordingly some ancient authors credit Theseus with first making wrestling a *technê* and establishing the first instruction in the subject.²⁴

One word stands out in connection with this other bandit implied though not named in the *Theaetetus* passage. From early times, and then down to late antiquity, people spoke of the *palaistra* of Cercyon. In classical Athens this word referred to a place where the young learned to wrestle in the tradition of physical education attributed to Theseus. It can't mean that in connection with Cercyon, but must refer to an area in the Attic wilds where Cercyon had wrestled passing strangers to their deaths.²⁵

The name *palaistra* now occupies the same double space as the act of wrestling, and the same space as Socrates himself. They go with lawless brutality as easily as they do with a civilization's customs. And really this is nothing to wonder at, given that the Greek gymnasium itself balances between hyper-civilization and wilderness. The gymnasia of Athens were understood as civic spaces. In Plato, Socrates says that he never goes out of the city of his own accord, and yet he frequents gymnasia, as if they belonged inside the city's space. At the same time the gymnasia were all located outside the city walls, and their open spaces recalled countryside. If an enclosed garden in Genesis can stand for the great outdoors that existed before walled cities, the Greeks' enclosed gymnasia too might represent wild territory, even if in fact gymnasia came into existence late in Greek urban development.²⁶

There is a similar double sense in the nudity that gives Greek gymnasia their name. Later chapters will explore the aura of artifice about Greek nudity, that it was not the primitive state into which humans were born but an achievement. You could take your clothes off and declare the result to be a costume, only after having been clothed. But this association is distinctively Hellenic. Plato's *Protagoras* acknowledges the contrary sense of the naked human – the connotation of nudity one finds more consistently in antiquity outside Greece – according to which the naked human animal is conceived as the animalistic human. In that dialogue Protagoras tells a myth about how human morality began. At the dawn of creation, human beings possess the intelligence that lets them flourish, but no cities to live in nor clothes to wear; and so they remain the other animals' peers, for all their brains, until Zeus gives them justice and shame.²⁷

It is striking to consider human nakedness coinciding with humans' asocial beastly condition; for that is true of our wrestling thugs. Not in Plato, because

Plato says nothing about what Skiron or Antaeus had been wearing, nor does any other ancient author I know; but several images of each of those outlaws survive on Attic vases, and offer glimpses into Athenian popular religion that educated authors provide only occasionally.

It is not surprising that all the extant images represent Antaeus and Skiron in the moments that glorify the heroes who killed them. Heracles is bear-hugging Antaeus in the air or more uncomfortably has him on the ground just before thinking of that trick. Theseus is kicking Skiron into the sea. What might surprise a modern viewer is that neither bad guy has any clothes on. The most prominent and famous examples include, for Antaeus, a red-figure kalyx krater signed by the painter Euphronios and dated to between 515 and 510 BC; a cruder red-figure dated to around 480; and an Attic black-figure amphora attributed to the Michigan Painter, and dated to 490-480.²⁸ It should be noted that in this last example a blank black area shows where modern reconstruction has been inserted to cover a missing part of the original pottery; that piece replaces the midsection of one of the two figures, so despite that character's nakedness otherwise, one cannot confidently assert him to have nothing on at all. But it does seem even there, as is beyond doubt in the other examples, that Antaeus has no clothing on. Repeatedly on these vases, an undressed Heracles reaches around the undressed body of Antaeus.

Likewise Theseus always seizes a naked Skiron. One Attic red-figure cup from 500 to 490 shows him and Skiron on one side, Theseus and Procrustes on the other. Another Athenian piece, a red-figure cup from the first half of the fifth century, is signed by the painter Douris. In a red-figure kalyx from a little later (440–430), attributed to the Codrus Painter, Theseus wears a tunic.²⁹ But Skiron is naked in this scene as he is in the others.

There is a question here about which direction one moves in after stripping: toward civilization and law or out into the frontier? What kind of palaistra is this, and which wrestling will take place there? If it is the type that can be taught, the sport belongs in gymnasia understood as civic institutions, precursors to philosophical schools. Otherwise one wrestles spontaneously and lawlessly, as Socrates used to cross-examine before the founding of schools that could contain and regulate the dialectic.

Let's say that the dialogue's first mention of wrestling evoked philosophizing as they now practice it in the Academy. It surely counts for something that Socrates imagined Spartan wrestling when a verdict about Protagoras was at stake. Socrates wanted Theodorus to declare Protagoras bested, but personal loyalty stopped Theodorus. Why pronounce his old friend wrong? But there can be no philosophical schooling without the lawful dialectic that makes you disagree even with a dear friend.

Then Theodorus's reconsideration of the metaphor returns Socrates to the rogue status he had had in pre-Academic days. He was called atopôtatos then, the oddest kind of person but also the most out of place. And the *Theaetetus*'s play with how to wrestle marks out, again, the distance between philosophy as academic practice and Socratic lone-wolf philosophizing.

Two myths of philosophy's beginning (archê)

The image of Socrates battered by disputes sounds like his trademark irony in the bad sense of that word. Socrates is the *eirôn* "dissembler." Most readers see him as administering the punishment and walking away, not taking a pounding. But in fact the pummeled Socrates also lingers in the background of the *Theaetetus*'s other version of the distinction between philosophical types, namely philosophy as order and also as the element left outside that order. There are mythic metaphors for the philosopher, quite unrelated to heroes who wrestle, in which again the place of philosophy is hard to determine.

If the wrestling metaphor invoked Greek culture and the outlaw who makes culture possible only despite himself, this dialogue's mythical characterizations of philosophy lead its reader to a cosmic version of the same distinction. On the one hand nature moves and grows and generates itself, and philosophy as part of nature's family accompanies that movement as an ongoing report on nature's progress. But where philosophy fails to have been entirely borne by the nature that philosophers devote themselves to understanding, where philosophy is a freak, it becomes something spontaneous again, and an ungovernable sign of nature's ungovernable quality.

One of the prominent myths in the *Theaetetus* has already come up. Actually it is less than a myth, more like a mythic moment, being the lone verse in Homer's *Iliad* about "Ocean the origin of the gods and their mother Tethys." Chapter 2 found Socrates claiming to hear a hint about the theory of flux in that line, and taking the Heracliteans to task for releasing the hidden philosophy as proverb or as gossip. ³⁰ But beyond coming together in schools with students and passing secret teachings along to the students, philosophers also gather together on a larger scale, inter-academically joining with philosophers they've never met to create a tradition.

Plato is very likely serious when he pictures a philosophical tradition that goes back to Homer and talk of Ocean. He makes nearly identical claims in other contexts. The *Timaeus*, drawing on Hesiod's *Theogony*, puts Ocean early in its story of how the world came to be. In the *Cratylus* Ocean is even more fundamental to nature and more embedded in the intellectual tradition. Socrates connects the doctrine of flux that comes from Heraclitus with Ocean as it is spoken of by the combined voices of Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus.³¹

Ocean is somewhat diminished in the poetic tradition after Homer, as when Hesiod makes him a child of Earth though still father of all Titans. But in the emerging tradition of Greek cosmology, where that means a tradition that seeks to turn old myths into new world principles, Ocean is a persistent name of the first importance. In the Derveni Papyrus (already mentioned) and other sources, Ocean is part of Orphic speculation. Ocean also plays a major early role in the philosophical cosmogony attributed to Pherecydes of Syros, whose account of the world's origins mixes poetic theogony with a depersonalized materialistic philosophy, a genre mix that caused Aristotle to say that Pherecydes refrained from "saying everything mythically." One feature of the mixing, no doubt one

to which Aristotle's comment applies, is the ambiguous place of Ocean in the account, both personage and principle, divinity and materiality.³²

Among philosophers Ocean was available to function as an abstract principle of nature (even if that term is anachronistic), partly because no active cult of Ocean existed to keep the name committed to ritual practice. It may also be because, by Plato's time, Ocean had ceased to be the great body of water out beyond the Mediterranean. Indeed it can be hard to say just what that vague word was meant to identify in the fourth century. The Timaeus makes Ocean a cosmic principle, but does not use the name for the body of water outside the Mediterranean, which is referred to in the *Timaeus* as the "Atlantic." Aristotle's Meteorology calls the same body, our Atlantic Ocean, merely thalatta "sea" or "the outer sea," and treats the name "Ocean" as a riddle told by earlier thinkers. 33

So it is with some justice that Plato sets Ocean at the beginning of the philosophical tradition. And it is fair to say that in the process he moves toward presenting philosophy as a tradition. The *Theaetetus*'s list of followers after Homer resembles a doxography, hence a motion toward understanding philosophy as a subject with a history. If we define doxography as an assemblage of doxai "opinions" on a given subject, then as some historians have argued there is no true doxography in Plato – nor in Aristotle, because both of them view the history of philosophy (when they consider that history at all: consistently on Aristotle's part but only sporadically on Plato's) as possessed of teleological development.³⁴ On this modern understanding of doxography as resisting arrangement in any systematic form, when doxography becomes impossible the history of philosophy comes to be necessary to the subject. If philosophy develops toward an end point, then it can't be fully understood without appeal to its development or history. Then the study of philosophy presupposes the study of philosophy's history.

For some centuries now philosophers have resisted making the subject's history integral to its study. The very word "history" acquired negative implications in philosophy as early as the seventeenth century, "suggesting as it did the record of human error." Thinking in the context of past philosophy amounted to the surrender to what was no better than custom, the opinions held in one place not another, which (in another context) Locke called the "fashions" of that place. 35

Plato has an answer to such complaints about studying the history of philosophy, or at least he does on one vision of what philosophy is. If nature philosophy began with Ocean, the subject is not arbitrary. What justifies philosophy is its natural appearance. According to one view of philosophy in the academy today, and for all the differences in context, the reason to study philosophy is again that people find themselves thinking this way. It's natural, therefore part of a person's growth.

Meanwhile, on the fantasy about the history of philosophy that we find voiced in the *Theaetetus* – not necessarily endorsed, but put into words and entertained – systematic thinking about nature began where nature begins. All nature originates in Ocean and the history of philosophy originates in references to Ocean. Then the tradition is not haphazard. You might even say that not

only a history of philosophy exists but even a natural history of the subject; for surely now philosophy is natural, and if its history is a natural history then the philosophical tradition can be, in Richard Foreman's words, "a place through which truth passes."36

Wonder and the rainbow

Ocean is not the only mythical representation of philosophy that appears in this dialogue. Socrates forces another one into the conversation, in a passage that Plato's readers (starting with Aristotle) have quoted more often than any other part of the *Theaetetus*. In fact people quote this passage without knowing it to be Plato's.

Early in the dialogue, Socrates presents Theaetetus with elementary puzzles about natural change. Theaetetus admits to not knowing how he would solve them. "By the gods, Socrates, I wonder [thaumazô] extraordinarily about such questions."³⁷ And Socrates pauses from the task of understanding motion to hold up this verb thaumazô that Theaetetus used. The boy is revealing himself to be a philosopher, he says; mala gar philosophou touto to pathos, to thaumazein: ou gar allê archê philosophias ê hautê "This the philosopher's passion, to wonder," or the wondering: "for no other beginning to philosophy but that." That is the ultra-literal translation, word for word. More compactly and as a popular saying: Philosophy begins in wonder.

In the original, as represented in the ultra-literal translation, no verb appears in either clause. The verb "to be" is commonly implied in such Greek sentences and left unstated, but which tense does the sentence call for? Do you say that wondering was the philosopher's passion, that there was no other beginning to philosophy? Or that wondering is the philosopher's passion, and there is no other beginning to philosophy?

One reading makes philosophy a historical phenomenon. Philosophy once began; and it began but once. According to the other reading it is eternal. If wonder is the beginning of philosophy, as the proverbialized translation "Philosophy begins in wonder" also implies, then philosophy can have any number of beginnings, as good health begins with a sensible diet, many times over. There would have to be many beginnings for philosophy, in order for the sentence to speak plausibly about philosophers. Philosophy is a standing possibility for humans and actualized whenever they chance to wonder.

Philosophy has no need of history on this account of its beginning. The sentence in present tense ignores history, somewhat as "Life begins at conception" cannot refer to the first life on earth. If philosophy is a standing possibility it does not have to have begun in the past; nor does it have any need to study its past. And philosophy's appeal has long derived from this understanding of the subject as needless of history. Every late arrival is an equal participant.

But suppose Socrates is saying that wondering was – as in, that it once was, once upon a time - the beginning of philosophy. He is still welcoming Theaetetus to serious inquiry, but now the inquiry exists as an organized

ongoing activity. Philosophy began when somebody wondered and it has gone on since, presumably without need of another beginning. Someone once had that pathos, "experience, feeling, or suffering"; no one has to have it again. What is available to new arrivals is entry into the tradition, as by being taught. They may be welcome but they are still late.³⁹

There is nothing fanciful about seeing both meanings possible in the sentence, especially considering that Aristotle returns to the same thought in Metaphysics 1, where he spells both meanings out. It would be fanciful not to read Aristotle as alluding to the *Theaetetus*. "Through wondering people both now and at first began to philosophize ... which is also why the myth lover is in a way $[p\hat{o}s]$ a philosopher, for the myth is made up of wonders."⁴⁰ Aristotle is implying that the sentiment Socrates voices in ambiguous syntax is open to both readings. Philosophy today begins with the act of wondering, and all philosophizing began with a wondering event.

Thus far the point is familiar to readers of the *Theaetetus*. But Socrates does not rest with a remark about wonderment. He gives credit to Hesiod for having already understood this point mythically: "He who said that Iris was the offspring of Thaumas did not genealogize badly." And this aside creates an interpretive puzzle about what Socrates, or Plato, imagines to be the mythical nature of philosophy.

Thaumas is a minor sea god in Hesiod's *Theogony*, one of the deities of the sea who produce its marvels. So his name naturally comes very close to thauma "wonder, marvel, miracle." But for Socrates to find validation in Hesiod, for the myth to be saying in anticipation of Socrates that philosophy has wonder as its origin, Iris must represent philosophy as Thaumas represents wonder. And in this dialogue so concerned with defining the knowledge that is in philosophy, and with portraying that distinguished creature "the philosopher" - in a dialogue where you expect this mythic reference above all to receive special attention -Socrates offers no elucidation. Why is the gods' herald an allegory for philosophy?

Plato's readers have stepped into the breach with their own explanations. In the dialogue Cratylus, Socrates traces Iris's name to the verb eirein "to speak," and we know that Socratic philosophers speak. So Iris is philosophy by being the power of speech. Or: Iris brings the sacred water of Styx that the gods swear on, as philosophy seeks certainty in all knowledge, so she is a principle of certainty. Or what is much the opposite: Iris is the rainbow, mere appearance, therefore an example of the relativism that the *Theaetetus* is assessing.⁴²

The interpretations put forward could not all be right, although they do all seem to be ingenious. And yet their ingenuity is the worrisome thing about them. If Socrates did mean something so arcane by his allusion, why didn't he explain himself? Plato could not have imagined that a recondite reference to Iris's message delivery went without saying.

Could this be the secret doctrine that Socrates withholds from the world? Protagoras divulged his theory of nature only to his students, letting everyone else read about a vacuous relativism, and this act of exclusion proved that he was a teacher. The Ephesians failed as teachers by spelling out the secret about nature that Homer had shrouded in mythic poetry. By the same reasoning, Socrates might be demonstrating his teacherly function when he refuses to tell the world how Iris stands for philosophy.

But there is a threat of contradiction in the idea that philosophical teaching consists in secretiveness just when it is identifying philosophy with the figure who comes to deliver messages; to inform; to disseminate.

Hesiod actually associates Iris with both of the great original water gods, Pontus and Ocean. Her father Thaumas is a son of Pontus, the sea god who produced everything freakish and dangerous in and on the open seas. Pontus is salt water not fresh; he is the sea understood as threat and obstacle not water the source of life and transportation. His surface is the open road where pirates lurk and his depths harbor monsters. But on her mother's side Iris has a quite different origin. Her mother Electra descends from the god whom Hesiod portrays as benevolent water, Ocean the father of waters and freshwater god. Those two primeval figures spawned rival families, with Pontus as the source for a threatening and hostile counter–pantheon to the wholesome descendants of Ocean. 44

Iris as the granddaughter of both great flowing patriarchs has descended from nature at large. Meanwhile in her own person she works as a messenger. This is the trait most associated with her name, more than the rainbow and far more than her occasional errand bringing a jar of Styx's water. For Thaumas and Electra produced the Harpies in addition to Iris, and Hesiod calls all the sisters fleet-footed. This swiftness that Iris shares with the Harpies suggests the grounds for contrasting them, as fleet-footed daughters moving in opposite directions for opposite purposes. The Harpies grab and snatch and hide. They steal people off the earth and the soothsayer Phineas's food away from him, to punish him for having reported Zeus's secrets to mortals. Being their swift counterpart, Iris moves fast in the opposite direction, bringing where the Harpies take and publicizing where they keep secrets hidden.

Even proverbially, Iris very early comes to signify message delivery and other such errands. In the *Odyssey* Homer describes a beggar on Ithaca, whom the suitors to Penelope have nicknamed Iros because they can send him on errands. The suitors amuse themselves with a boxing match between Iros and the disguised Odysseus, who gives the beggar a head beating. ⁴⁷ The joking name for a gluttonous oaf insults the divine herald, but it is a reminder of what activity defines her. (There would be no point to such a nickname if the suitors had had to stop and explain it every time they mocked the beggar.)

Her parentage together with her characteristic behavior create a natural meaning for Iris, therefore for philosophy insofar as it is represented by her. Iris comes from the natural world, not arriving at the moment of its creation but some time afterward. Socrates cites the poetic verses about the two divinities that call Iris progeny (daughter of Thaumas) and Ocean a progenitor (genesis of gods). As the world's herald, Iris comes to report on it. She – philosophy – begins with her own origin, being – as philosophy – the voice that nature made for herself, the event that comes along in the natural course of things to

disclose the natural course of things coming along. In time, in other words, nature takes on a voice. Once in possession of that voice, it speaks of nature.

Iris the teras

If a message from heaven is the stuff of fantasy, it also belongs among those fantasies that cannot be coherently imagined. Indeed the positivist has a critique ready for all alleged messages. God as infinite being can only be signified by something infinite. A finite creature can't perceive the infinite, but only takes in a finite part of it. Demanding a sign from God that you know to be God's message is like demanding a grammatical letter written in a language you don't understand.

Religious believers understood the problem before the first positivist skeptic was born. The sad end of Semele dramatizes this eternal epistemological tragedy. Semele demanded proof that her lover was Zeus, but as mortal she could not continue to exist in the presence of that proof.

So how can there be a divine herald? The herald has to declare that a herald has arrived before delivering the announcement; otherwise the news might not even register as news. Thus sometimes the herald's status is already the news, as when a uniformed man knocks at the door with an envelope for the soldier's parents. The message that matters already arrived in the person of the uniform. When the herald comes from Zeus the announcement must begin with what is not uniform, rather in something more suitable to speaking the will of Zeus and so greater than what is uniform.

In the *Iliad*, news from Zeus comes with a rainbow. Book 11 refers to the rainbow that Zeus set in the clouds as a teras "portent, sign" to mortals. In this passage Homer is describing Agamemnon's armor, the breastplate of which is decorated with snakes resembling rainbows. And in Book 17 Athena moves among the Achaeans "as Zeus stretches a purple rainbow out of heaven to be a teras for mortals either of war or of a chilly storm" - news from Zeus in either case, since he would be the cause of a storm or of a great war.⁴⁸

These are no biblical promises about the end of misery, which might explain why both references to Iris in the *Iliad* call her a teras, which means not only portent but also a freak or monster. 49 In other words it is either a monster or the sign of a monster.

Either a monster is here or it is on the way; more perfectly it is here and therefore a monster is coming. For what could really alert you to extraordinary events ahead but an extraordinary event? Zeus is the great intrusion into the natural sequence, obstructing nature as sequence. His herald must be what normally does not happen. And so if the rainbow is Iris's uniform it both sets her apart from what anyone else could be wearing and also identifies her every time: the only uniform suitable to a monster.

When a Greek teras does not point beyond itself to the thing it portends, Homer calls it *pelôron* "prodigious," an outsized thing. ⁵⁰ Greek authors from Homer and the archaic Pindar to classical-era Herodotus and Plato combine

the words *teras* and *thauma* in such contexts.⁵¹ What is inherently monstrous makes you wonder, as if because the thing feels significant and you cast about to see what it might signify. And the genealogy makes sense. Thaumas the god of wonders can only have a *teras* for his child.

For moderns, curiosity carries positive associations that make it hard to assimilate wonderment to monstrosity. Valorizing curiosity as we do we hear Socrates slap Theaetetus on the back and we think "Yes of course, wonder. Wonders make us curious and curiosity leads to learning." But the ancient world, although it did not speak in unison on the subject, could see what was questionable about curiosity and sometimes declared it to be a vice. Plutarch sounds troubled by those "curious" slave-buyers in Rome who look over not the attractive young people for sale but the oddities in the *teratôn agora* "monster market."

When Tertullian condemns curiosity, he will cite the *Theaetetus* itself as evidence. Thales stared at the sky and fell into a well, as the *Theaetetus* tells us: Tertullian calls this "stupidam curiositatem." The *teras* as abnormality warns of coming abnormalities but also appeals to an abnormal wish to know more.⁵²

Philosophy understood as Iris now looks less like the normal accompaniment to nature and the sound of nature announcing itself. Iris understood as philosophy belongs not in nature's flow but in violation of that sequence. Iris alerts you not to what is natural but to the monster that signifies nature's failure.

Socrates may not have needed to spell out his reference to Iris if the set of allusions led to the rather ordinary point that philosophy accompanies nature announcing its nature. But then he would also have no reason to keep that allusion secret. Iris as monstrosity puts him in a different position, really a predicament. Can *this* be his secret doctrine, that the philosophy that begins in amazement is philosophy as *un*natural? Now that would be worth keeping under wraps.

Socrates the philosopher

Odd that when the *Odyssey* revisits the *Iliad*'s *teras* and omen of world catastrophe it comes back as farce after tragedy, with the glutton and beggar who is beaten up by Odysseus. Odder still that Socrates should have pictured himself in the *Theaetetus* also beaten by heroes. "Iros" might be a good nickname for him too.

Socrates resembles Iris in a more precise sense, by virtue of being a midwife. The only dream-interpretation book that survives from antiquity, Artemidorus's *Oneirocriticus*, will read the dream of a midwife as meaning that news is coming. Artemidorus deciphers dream symbols on the basis of resemblance; in this case he points out that midwives look for what is hidden.⁵³ If Socrates is a midwife, he too signals the imminent arrival of news, and Iris the child of Thaumas represents philosophy as Socrates induces it, attendant upon the wonderment of friends and strangers. Socratic philosophy waits for wonder, and where Socrates is present new philosophy may be just ahead – or else news of another philosophical miscarriage.

Despite what Socrates says about bringing forth philosophy, after all, he has also made the midwife one who examines alleged births to see if they are real. In practice the *Theaetetus* depicts him rejecting ideas and welcoming them as newborns into the family. He looks out for the bad births, what is sometimes called an *eidôlon* "idol, image" and sometimes *anemiaion* "windy, a wind egg." His doing so brings us back to the *teras*. That word does turn up in Plato's dialogues, but almost always in the metaphorical sense meaning "strange," somewhat as the English adjective "weird," once denoting supernatural happenings and the work of fate, now contents itself with the general significance of "unusual." But one passage in Plato uses the word literally. A king's son will be a king, a good-looking man's son will be good-looking, and so on – except when *teras genêtai* "a monster comes to be." The *teras* is by definition the failure of normal reproduction.

Plato's use of *teras* in that case (from the *Cratylus*) is echoed in a court document that dates to the same period in which he was writing. The speech-writer Aeschines makes the *teras* neither prodigy nor portent. He is summarizing a curse, according to the terms of which those who violate an oath will have land bearing no fruit, flocks that fail to make offspring, and women who bear *terata* rather than children who are *eikota* "resembling," which is to say resembling their parents.⁵⁷ The *teras* is a break in the continuous sequence of births. It is a failure of reproduction for the oath-violators' women to match the infertility of their fields and livestock.

What the curse threatens outside philosophy can happen in its way to the philosophical genealogy. A thought fails to carry philosophical truth despite having been conceived by a philosopher. Truth does not pass along its customary route through the genealogy. The *teras* appears, now understood as sham birth or wind egg as opposed to legitimate reproduction.

These non-births that the *Theaetetus* sees as monstrosities of philosophical education are the *terata* that Socrates as philosophy's Iris was born to announce. Chapter 1 found the dialogue saying that philosophy is a genealogy; or hoping it could be; or rather sometimes hoping and sometimes resigning itself to acknowledge. But as a genealogy, philosophy also contains the possibility for interruptions in inheritance. Socrates not only belongs outside the place of philosophy in that instance, he uses his absurd displaced position as *atopos* to monitor and judge what many people consider all the philosophy there is.

The very appearance of Socrates presages the news of philosophical monstrosity. He told Theaetetus that his midwifery accounted for people's considering him absurd in the extreme. As an *atopos* of such magnitude Socrates is the *teras* come to announce a *teras*. Just as Iris can only really say — was born to say, and is suited up iridescently so that she will seem to be saying, no matter what words come out of her mouth — that monstrous events lie ahead, so too Socrates' position outside the reproductive sequence suits him specially to announcing breaks in that sequence.

If Socrates refrains from rendering the genealogy of Iris into slogans one might noise abroad, if Iris as philosophy anthropomorphized remains a secret

doctrine, his reticence now looks like more than a tactic. What makes Iris philosophy makes philosophers monsters. Is this fit even for intimates to hear?

Teachers frequently confess that something in their subject cannot be taught. They might divulge this secret in a back room, away from the lecture hall. That is not the same as depicting the subject in the language suited to a curse.

A new myth of philosophy's archê

Socrates as *teras* takes philosophy's own counter-institutional status to an extreme, though it does not exceed the images of philosophy enacted in later philosophical generations. The Cynics especially will let themselves do without intellectual shelter as they deny themselves literal roofs over their heads. They will set the terms for philosophers as misfits, long-haired wanderers independent-minded to the verge of madness.

The Cynics were to find unforeseeable enthusiasts in the early Christians who appreciated and would sometimes emulate their discipline of abjection. But even today, when no one expects academics to resemble friars, the subtle disappointment that people sometimes register when meeting a philosopher – they don't expect white robes, they're not even sure what to expect, but *something* – reflects the lingering success of Cynicism, with its demand for philosophy that is lived as absurdity and oddness.

The pathos of the *Theaetetus*, however, rests on its willingness to take Socratic absurdity for the entirety of what can be recognized as the *pathos* called philosophy. Philosophical teaching is at stake, of a kind that the lone outsider cannot provide. The question for the *Theaetetus* is not how to turn everyone into a Socrates, but how to preserve enough Socratism in a world that has no Socrates in it, nor even a decent resemblance.

The *Theaetetus* nearly contains the longest most rhapsodic passage in Plato that speaks to the question. In this passage Socrates expounds on the nature of an ideal philosopher, what he calls the *koruphaios* "head man" among philosophers – how the man lives and what he lives for, how he sees his fellow humans and assesses their concerns – what the *koruphaios* may hope for. The dialogue's other references to philosophers and schools of thought need to be prised out from mentions of baboons and rainbows, but in this long central passage Socrates speaks directly of who the philosopher is. And before moving on from the *Theaetetus* to one set of the questions it inspires, it is worth pausing over this passage and trying to bring the figure that it portrays into sharper focus.

But I said the *Theaetetus* only "nearly contains" the passage, for Socrates treats it as lying outside philosophical inquiry. He speaks of embarking on a *parergon* "digression" from their joint inquiry into knowledge to describe the philosopher. Theodorus marks their return to serious philosophizing with a sigh, he as old man now more equipped for vague encomia to noble men than to puzzle cases about knowledge. And the whole discussion was prompted by a reference to *scholê* "leisure," which led Socrates to explain how philosophers possess the free time and denizens of law courts do not. He can even go on to explain *scholê* in the

first place, Socrates says, precisely because of the scholê they have. This is a thing for one's free time, not proper work, which is to say not an ergon but a parergon, what goes beyond or falls outside the domain of work.

Socrates, normally eager to follow every side path wherever it leads, on top of being always eager to contemplate the person of the philosopher, chooses this one passage to shoo his readers away from. This description of the philosopher must really not have mattered. Or else the passage matters in some other way, and drawing attention to its digressive status highlights the passage's significance as philosophy even though appearing to want to pass over it.

Socrates spends the parergon contrasting masters of rhetoric, those who appear to the vulgar to be powerful and important people, with philosophers. Those engaged in daily politics, speaking in the assembly and before a courthouse jury, live as slaves do. They perform before their masters for awards and always under constraint, with clocks limiting how long they speak and - while in court - an opponent holding the outline or abstract they submitted, and keeping them to the promised written argument.⁵⁸

The philosophers on the other hand are "like us." But they are also unlike Socrates and Theodorus, for the figure to consider now is the koruphaios "head man, chorus leader" of the philosophical tribe, not its rank-and-file members. And the subsequent portrayal of that ideal type sets the philosopher apart by every opposition Plato had at his disposal: free/slave, male/female, soul/body. The koruphaios is free where his rivals are slaves. The illustrative story of Thales the philosopher falling down a well pits him against a Thracian slave girl, someone not free or male or even Greek.⁵⁹

Despite being head men of their tribe, these philosophers will not look much like the types of men who are usually called chiefs or nobles. They do not know the way to the courtroom or assembly, they oute horôsin oute akouousi "neither see nor hear" debates over new laws, or the laws themselves inscribed on walls. Even in a dream they give no thought to social clubs or dinner parties. In fact they are so oblivious to such phenomena that they do not even know that they do not even know them.⁶⁰

The philosopher might be human where his neighbors are animals, for this passage again evokes the non-human non-philosopher. The koruphaios can't tell whether his neighbor is a thremma "animal, nursling," and the political power that others admire strikes him as no better than that of a swineherd or cowherd. He differs from other humans as much as gods do from mortals, for the philosopher is engaged in becoming like God.⁶¹

Other free Greek men mass together undifferentiable. Their wealth and landholdings seem like nothing much to the philosopher. Grand genealogies prove nothing, as far as he is concerned. If some earlier generations contain kings and heroes, there will be slaves and barbarians in others.

This last genealogical point is a nod at the scene in Herodotus in which he reports on his predecessor Hecataeus's trip to Egypt. Hecataeus of Miletus, considered the first Greek historian, had chronicled Greek families that claimed divine ancestry a dozen generations back; but Egyptian priests showed him birth records going back further than any Greek could imagine, all their generations untouched by divinity.⁶² Plato carries forward the Herodotean mockery of aristocratic pretension but also answers it. Now one way *does* exist for sharing in divinity, only not thanks to being born into the genealogy that humans consider the right one.

Philosopher as headmaster

The leading philosopher is a man apart when he takes no interest in market-place or court or council chamber. Nor do the laws passed in assembly mean a thing to him. It would be tempting to make him a clandestine self-portrayal by Socrates, except that (as many readers observe) Socrates *did* go to the *agora* and serve in the council. The *koruphaios* is not an oddball in the Socratic mold and not even necessarily a loner.

As noted in Chapter 2, the name *koruphaios* "leader" already suggests that this philosopher belongs among others. Modern readers who know only the gods of monotheism may be misled by the philosopher's becoming "like the god," hearing this as a solitary condition. But Socrates is speaking in a time that acknowledges hundreds of major and minor divinities. Attaining godhood means joining a new if smaller multitude – even a society, given that very few Greek divinities were imagined leading solitary lives. Even Pluto had a wife and counted himself among members of his brother's council. Sometimes you find an immortal alone – Calypso in her cave – but even she desired company.

It is also telling that the *parergon* begins as a commentary on philosophical *scholê*, the philosopher's capacity for pursuing any argument wherever it goes. That word *scholê* appears four times in the *Theaetetus*: twice in the *parergon*, once in a later look back on this passage, and once in a comment already considered, about what the Ephesian philosophers tell their students privately about nature's flux. I said about the last of these passages that *scholê* naturally meant "school" there, or carried the meaning close by its primary meaning. Not long after Plato, the root began referring to scholarly and scholastic things, where before him it only signified free time or non-work. Plato seems to have been writing during the word's transformation from one meaning to the other, from leisure to the study that depends on leisure time.

Ushering in the parergon, Socrates says that philosophers tous logous en eirênêi epi scholês poiountai "produce their arguments in peace at leisure." These two words epi scholês recur when he proposes that the Ephesians impart some special doctrine to their students, and even this reference to eirênê "peace" will find an answering verb in the later passage, eirêneuousin "they live peaceably, they reach a truce," referring to the Ephesian philosophers when they are not confronting dialectical opponents. So the reading of scholê that feels unforced in the later passage about the Ephesians, the translation of that word by "school," also has a place in Socrates' introduction to the parergon. Philosophers produce their discourses at leisure, but also at school; and the subsequent encomium to the philosophical head man describes someone who belongs in a school. The man

93

may not find his way to the agora or the *boulê* building, or know his neighbors' names – those all belong within the city's walls – but outside those walls the *gumnasion* is his natural place.

The clearest evocation of the Academy in the parergon comes from its repeated use of "Platonic" metaphysical phrases, terminology that sounds Platonic to readers of his other dialogues despite the puzzling absence of these crucial words from the rest of the *Theaetetus*. For to scholars of the dialogues, one great difficulty with the *Theaetetus* derives from its appearing when it does among the dialogues. Chronologically speaking, the Theaetetus seems to come after the Phaedo and the Republic, two dialogues for which the Forms are metaphysical posits; and every textual clue puts it before the Sophist, in which some theory of Forms continues to be at work. So this dialogue's question about knowledge invites an obvious reply from the Platonist that knowledge is knowledge of the Forms; and yet those entities never come up.⁶⁴ Or rather, the Forms do not come up in the dialectical examination of knowledge. Here in the parergon however we find Socrates saying that philosophers want to chance upon tou ontos "being." They ask ti de pot'estin anthrôpos, he says, "what the human is," where that means an inquiry opposed to the quest to know about this or that particular human. Their subject is autês dikaiosunês te kai adikias "justice itself and injustice itself." Any one of those phrases alone sounds like textbook Platonism. Put them together within the span of three Stephanus pages and they are hammering the point home.⁶⁵

The difficult question is what role language of Forms could be playing in the *Theaetetus*'s examination of knowledge. Where does this dialogue fit among Plato's discussions of Forms?⁶⁶ That is a challenge for other treatments of the *Theaetetus*, not this one, because I am not trying to locate it among other dialogues. And whether or not the Forms are implicated in the *Theaetetus*'s discussion of knowledge, the Platonic language in the *parergon* seems to be clearly saying that real philosophers think and talk about Forms. The all—too-inadequate existing evidence about philosophical practice in Plato's Academy tells us that the school practiced inquiries into definitions (even when that evidence survives as a joke about pumpkins). Quite probably Diogenes the Cynic never did march into the Academy with the plucked chicken that would refute Plato's definition of the human as "featherless biped" — it sounds too much like a Cynics' tale valorizing their early hero — but the story would have had no point unless Plato's Academy really had engaged in defining grand terms in general, and even specifically had tried to arrive at the meaning of *anthrôpos* "human being." ⁶⁷

Socrates carries out his inquiry into knowledge with Theaetetus as if they were in school together; hence the curricular feeling of the question "What is knowledge?" Suppose the explanation were as simple as this, that Plato now depicts what one does with students, and what one does is to guide them through increasingly difficult questions or puzzle cases. What one does *not* do is leap to the high points of advanced metaphysics among unprepared students. That would be like vouchsafing esoteric doctrines to someone who had just enrolled in the school. Aged Theodorus likes the *parergon*, and were he the

only one present with Socrates they could remain here. But a child is with them, an introductory student, and Socrates spirits this other secret doctrine out of the student's sight saying it is nothing important.

For that the Platonic language appears in a passage labeled a *parergon* should not be interpreted to mean that Plato denies the material's importance. To say that is to ignore what Socrates says about digressions at the beginning of this very passage. If pursuing tangents is the mark of the philosopher, then Socrates' pause to portray the *koruphaios* among philosophers, precisely because it is a pause from the main labor and even on the condition that it is, proves that philosophy is taking place. This written discussion that Eucleides and Terpsion are listening to in Megara years later, and you and I another few millennia after them, carries on the philosophical practice despite Socrates' absence. And if you think of the *Theaetetus* as a product of the established school known as the Academy, the digression proves that even with Socrates gone and philosophy given an institutional home, what he conceived as its essential activity continues to take place.

Have no doubt that a passage like this *parergon* is a response to the death of Socrates. He contrasts the freedom to examine all sides of a question with the demand that a courtroom imposes to respond to a question in one way, in a fixed time – grim irony, considering that the dialogue will end with the start of the legal process that kills Socrates. But seeing only the grim irony amounts to reading the death of Socrates exactly as his prosecutors did, and the jurors who voted to have him executed. As Socrates says in the Platonic version of his defense speech, those people hoped he was making Athenian philosophy happen by himself, so that philosophizing in Athens might die together with him. Plato replies to that mean hope with his Academy, where philosophy continues after the death of Socrates and will continue after the death of those who resemble Socrates. The trial by its nature will contain no *scholê*, but despite the trial philosophy will still have its own *scholê*, both its time for exercising dialectic and a school in which to exercise.

The philosophical gentleman

If the philosopher depicted in the *parergon* had been a Socrates, then elevating him above the politicking rhetorician would entail a familiar type of reversal. The person you consider powerful is revealed to be a slave in fact, while the eccentric and supposed outcast deserves recognition as life's true aristocrat. He is *atopos* on the outside and a gentleman within, somewhat as Alcibiades depicts Socrates in the *Symposium*.

But the *Theaetetus* does not contrast the two types along those lines. Its philosopher was truly reared *en eleutheriai kai scholês* "in freedom and leisure" – or, to render the phrase as an example of syllepsis, "in freedom and school." What makes that phrase syllepsis is the use of the verb "reared" in two different senses. Then Socrates turns to syllepsis again when he says the philosopher appears worthless in the performance of slavish services. He doesn't know how

to pack up the sack of his bedding, nor how to *opson hêdunai ê thôpas logous* "sweeten a dish or a flattering speech." Socrates uses *hêdunai* "to sweeten" in its literal meaning for the prepared dish that a slave would make, metaphorically for the flattering language cooked up by a slavish public speaker. And the use of an undeniable syllepsis here makes it plausible to look back to the phrase before it and read that sylleptically as well, so that it means "reared in freedom and in school."

Now for what that clever slave does *not* know: *anaballesthai* ... *epidexia eleutheriôs* "how to throw [a cloak] to his right as a free man does," nor how to speak truly about gods and human happiness. The doubled slavishness that consists in sweetening dishes and speeches corresponds to a contrasting doubled gentlemanliness, two things a serious man can do. The literal free man, the one socially recognized as such, knows how to dress. The metaphorical free man (for this is yet another syllepsis) is the philosopher capable of describing human happiness.

The force of the passage requires that packing up a mattress and sweetening food not be metaphors. It is not that the philosopher fails to know how to perform some slavish task equivalent to bedclothes packing, for Socrates spells out what that equivalent is, namely flattery. The philosopher shows his standing as free man by remaining ignorant of both the literal tasks performed by slaves and the figurative slave work found in courtrooms. Conversely, his antiphilosophical opposite fails to know either the true praise and argument befitting happy human beings, or the proper wearing of a cloak. The philosopher is a new kind of free man and citizen but also still the old kind, as the gymnasium in which he is ensconced now houses a previously unknown kind of exercise alongside the old familiar kind.

The Aristophanic comedy *Birds*, performed during Plato's adolescence, contains the most notable reference to the etiquette assumed in this passage. In that play Poseidon comes to the new empire of birds with other divine emissaries, including the non-Greek god Triballos, who betrays his lack of breeding by wearing his cloak awkwardly. Poseidon points the error out to Triballos: "What are you doing? Did you wrap yourself around from the left? Don't you put on your cloak [himation] from the right?" Poseidon goes on to complain about where democracy has brought them. He is the aristocrat of the divine group, while the foreign god had performed the ancient Athenian equivalent of – what do we say? White after Labor Day? Tails before five?

The best modern examples have to come from masculine dress, because that obeys more exact codes than dress for women does. The more formally a man dresses, the fewer options he has, up to the outfit referred to as a whole by its smallest part, "black tie." Wearing all the correct components of this outfit is not enough, not even all the components over the correct parts of the body. Picture a cummerbund wrapped around the outside of the evening coat. That is somewhat the impression that the oafish god Triballos makes, because he has draped his cloak over his back the wrong way, leaving his left arm free, completely opposite to the one right way a man dresses, which entails draping the

cloak *epidexia* "to the right," to use the word that both Poseidon and Socrates use (Poseidon in *Birds*, Socrates in *Theaetetus*).

What we know about Athenian dress makes Socrates' choice of example significant in two respects. The known fact here is that Socrates dressed, if not like a poor man, then certainly without fuss and formality. In the Symposium he surprises Aristodemus who finds him bathed and tas blautas hupodedemenon "with sandals tied on," a rare occurrence. 72 The tradition has him going around Athens in the plain light cloth known as the tribôn. The wealthy friends of Socrates called this poor man's dress, although the Greek ptôchos had a wider range of meaning than "poor," and we see even today that rich people can call anyone poor who falls short of being filthy rich. (In 2006 a wealthy young man named Brandon Davis said publicly that Lindsey Lohan was worth only \$7 million; "That means she is really poor." His experience made it hard for him to detect the evanescent difference between 7 million and nothing.) In Plato's Apology Socrates calls the 5 minas (500 drachmas) that Evenus charges for his lessons a low price for teaching wisdom, although it amounted to more than a year's pay for skilled labor. Was Socrates being ironic in calling the amount a low price? He says he can only afford a single mina (100 drachmas, about 1 pound of silver) as the loser in his own case, but then, what irony he deploys in that passage is also unclear. 74

His wealth aside, Socrates dressed in the simple way he did as part of his identification with Sparta. Thucydides contrasts Spartan dress with the luxurious clothing that Athenians had worn in an earlier generation; the *himation* belongs to that more aristocratic tradition rather than to the growing pro-Spartan trend that we would call "dressing down."⁷⁵

In a word: Socrates describes the philosopher as one who wears his cloak correctly despite his not being known for such behavior himself. This feature of the *koruphaios* has not been commented on anywhere near as often as his other differences from Socrates, but it is as important.

Plato's original readers would also have associated this talk of wrapping a cloak with Athenian public speakers, and Cleon the most notorious among them, for reasons that are less familiar to modern readers. Here is the second significance of the example. Again the wrapping of the himation reads not as a metaphor for formal thinking but as observable evidence about philosophers and their rivals. For during the time that Athenian clothing changed, aristocratic formality giving way to middle-class practicality, Pericles dominated the city's politics and culture, and culturally speaking he belonged to the old order. 16 It was already held against his foster son Alcibiades, the democracy's darling, that he did not hold to the masculine dress code. Alcibiades wore effeminate robes dyed purple, and let them hang so low that they dragged on the ground in the agora.⁷⁷ The orator Aeschines, writing around the year of Plato's death, looked back to Pericles as the last sôphrôn "self-controlled" public speaker (i.e. one who possessed the virtue of sôphrosunê) and one who never "spoke with the hand outside." The Athenian statesman and general Phocion, prominent during Plato's adult years and apparently a student at the Academy, was likewise a man

of such exceptional reserve that when cold weather forced him to wear a cloak he was never seen with his hand outside it.⁷⁸

Aeschines is positing a change in the orators' sartorial habits that began after Pericles and led to the embarrassing *terminus* he charges a man named Timarchus with, of dropping his *himation* in the assembly to display his naked body.⁷⁹ Aeschines is not the only observer to find cloak wearing in decline. The major figure of Athenian politics after Pericles was Cleon, hated by Aristophanes and Thucydides for demagoguery and ultra-democratic politics; and the Aristotelian *Constitution of Athens* says Cleon "spoke publicly with his clothes hitched up high, the others speaking decorously." Theophrastus attributes the same self-exposing lapse in dress to his character the *agroikos* "rustic, hick," who wears his cloak so high above the knee that when he sits *ta gumna autou phainesthai* "his naked parts show." As Poseidon's complaint implies in *Birds*, those suspicious of democracy saw such presentations of the male body as outcomes of the new order. "Democracy, where are you taking us now?" Se

Now it appears that the best philosopher, philosophy's leader, combines the new aristocratic status specific to academic life with an older understanding of aristocracy. Maybe it is only the philosopher's body that occupies the city, but that body still knows how to put on a *himation*. In the city in which philosophers make their appearance, that appearance distinguishes them as their reality distinguishes them within the school walls. The virtue at stake, *sôphrosunê*, is the same temperance or self-control that the schools of Athens took such pains to ascribe to their leaders.

For Aeschines it was not enough to charge Timarchus with public nudity to prove the man's immodesty. He also has to describe the exposed body in question as "so badly and disgracefully mistreated by drunkenness and misbehavior" that the thoughtful men present hid their faces in shame, shame because *sôphrosunê* had been violated. Gentlemanly dress is perceived, at least from a gentleman's perspective, not as the opulence that draws attention to itself but in terms of uniformity and anonymity. Among men in black tie, only the one who misknotted his bow tie is noticed, or the one wearing rich purple coat and trousers. Black-tie dress as such (if done right) renders men indistinguishable from one another.

The impending second part of this book will have space for seeing how some forms of dress and uniformity, masculine forms in particular, connote standardness and indistinction, functioning in this respect like the naked body taken alone. Just now we are still reading the *Theaetetus*, pausing just now over the sight of the unphilosophical orator, cloak riding too high on his legs, arm swinging free. As an emblem of masculine *sôphrosunê* the proper wearing of a *himation* is supposed to distinguish its wearer by absolutely not distinguishing him – or is imagined to do so, maybe, by those who dress right. It is imagined in the way that aristocrats commonly imagine their behavior as standard and self-effacing, even muted. The farmer stands out with his garlicky smell and the clothes that fall open before his nudities; Cleon likewise with his cloak hiked up; Timarchus naked and doughy. The sober-minded man is the one

who does *not* stand out. As self-control or temperance is the virtue Plato considers available to all citizens, so too the rightly wrapped *himation* that philosophers wear.

What the philosopher wears is standard dress even if practically no one else wears it. Around the chief philosopher one sees only the unfree, some non-Greeks and women, and indeterminably many non-humans; there isn't one potential fellow citizen in the group. Hecataeus and other early historians reported on a "city of slaves" in northern Africa, all its inhabitants slaves except sometimes for one priest. We are being asked to imagine a state, not necessarily of slaves, but still one in which the philosopher is the only native.

If the wrapping of the *himation* contradicts what Plato reports about Socrates himself, how closely it comes to Academy protocol is hard to tell from the existing literary evidence. Ephippus's fourth-century comedy *Shipwrecked Man* apparently accused Plato and his students of costume that was not merely right for a free man but expensive, dress for a rich man in fact. That play's fragment speaks of a pupil at the Academy, one who'd studied with Plato, earning enough money as a philosopher to appear before the Athenian assembly with a well-shaped beard, trim slippers on his feet, "his chest covered by the breast-plate of his wool tunic [chlanis]." This preciousness renders the Academician, according to *Shipwrecked Man*, "more like a stranger than a citizen." ⁸⁴

Even with no slanderous intent behind it, the comic context would make this an unreliable report. And the slanderous intent is there, in the mention of petty wage-earning by these heirs to Socrates, also in the gratuitous "more like a stranger" that reads as hostile appropriation of what Socrates says disarmingly, in the *Apology*, about his (not at all precious) attempt at public speaking. Striking, though, that when Aristophanes slandered Socrates and accused *him* of charging for lessons, not to mention making him an atheist cosmologist, he did not try to put Socrates into a tidy cloak or neat shoes. It seems the Academy's people were no longer Socrates. Even if they did not really flaunt money when they dressed, there was something about the way they did appear in public that lent itself to this comic distortion.

The visual record, unhelpful about earlier centuries and even earlier decades, suddenly enters to supplement what we know about the fourth century and later. Not so much what philosophers did wear in the Academy and after it, but how they were expected to be seen, starts to appear in statuary during the seventy-seven years between the execution of Socrates and the end of Athenian democracy (just after Alexander died) in 322. Those seventy-seven years, the final period of cultural significance for Athens as a self-governing city, cover the time during which Plato wrote his dialogues and founded his school; then Aristotle founded his own.

In Athenian statuary of the years in question one can say that the type "the philosopher" came to be acknowledged. Some of these figures on tombs, others apparently dedicated within the Academy or the Lyceum, they began to mark the philosopher as a specific identity, if not yet one to be instantly identified. Paul Zanker's attention to facial features, posture, and dress makes his

survey of these images compelling to anyone interested in ancient philosophers' presentations of themselves.

In the centuries after Alexander's death (the Hellenistic period) and then in fresh ways during the Roman Empire, more distinct types would emerge that amplify the story. But it is also remarkable how frequently the main types continue to fall into the two categories explored within the *Theaetetus*: philosopher as oddity, misfit, a singular critic of systematic thought; but also a sharply different personage from that one, philosopher as teacher, school member, team player, and participant in a collective institution.

As Zanker says, Athens had no stock image of the "intellectual as such," though caricatures of querulous sophists had appeared on vases as early as 440, before Plato wrote a single condemnatory word about them (given that he had not been born). Only the broadest features appear in depictions from the fourth century, such as the philosopher's middle or advanced age. Antiquity never portrayed a young philosopher. But this one characteristic is a long way from a recognizable type.⁸⁶

Some images of Socrates show up in Athens as early as ten or fifteen years after he was executed, informed in obvious ways by the common observation, which seems to have become proverbial, that Socrates looked like the old satyr Silenus. Mainly busts of these statues survive, not because they were made as busts by Athenian sculptors, but because later Roman copies routinely reproduced only the head of a Greek original. There is however one full-body statuette of Socrates dating to late in the fourth century, that depicts him cloaked in a himation.87 In this sculpture Socrates has dressed himself just right for a warm day, not swathed in the cloth but leaving half his chest open. Even so he fastens down his right hand, to keep the folds of the cloth on that side from slipping. On the left side the free end of the cloth winds around his forearm as it should on every freeborn man's. Is this Socrates in his Sunday best (or the pre-Christian equivalent)? Or has the sculptor abandoned verisimilitude in the interests of casting Socrates as a philosopher? - in which case the Theaetetus's expectations from philosophy match the expectations that Athenians at large would have had: philosopher as presentable male citizen.

The most detailed bust of Plato from the same century is a bronze Roman copy after an original that had been made when Plato was alive. Plato is middle-aged in this bust, wearing a longer beard than Athenian statues normally showed. But the new feature on this old image is its "serious expression." The eyebrows draw together and flex upward above the eyes. In all other respects this depiction follows the pattern for portraying citizens as that pattern had been set in the preceding century; "the serious expression of the philosophers is transferred to the nonspecific citizen image." Plato was portrayed, Zanker argues, "not as a philosopher, but simply as a good Athenian citizen ... and this is true of all other intellectuals of fourth-century Athens for whom we have preserved portraits." Like the koruphaios in the Theaetetus, Plato permits only his thoughtfulness — sôphrosunê become self-conscious — to distinguish him from any other serious Athenian. He stands out within the Academy, but among

Athenians the Academic does not try to stand out. Such a man could share a tent at the Olympics and be mistaken for nothing more than a great philosopher's homonym.

If I had to take issue with Zanker's masterful coverage of this great mass of material, it would be by challenging not his descriptions of these images, only the reason he gives for their look as solid citizens. "Democratic culture" accounts for philosophers' wanting to present themselves as solid citizens, Zanker says. But as I have been reading the *Theaetetus*, the demand that philosophers present themselves as respectable citizens already emerges there, heedless of democratic culture and even contemptuous of its values. And what do we say about the persistence of these images in the Roman Empire? That cannot be the work of democratic culture, for the Empire had no such thing.

As valuable as these images are, they do not challenge the dialogue's terms for sorting out the philosophical profession. As silent images they cannot offer a rival account of the etiology by which the terms emerged into public discourse. The philosopher who belongs to a school has reasons internal to that institutional life for living in the city as a free citizen. It is no small thing that philosophy has now established itself, for within the new establishment one can live in sôphrosunê and sociably as gentlemen do and nevertheless also aim to be godlike – inquire into being – asking, as gentlemen had never done, what knowledge is, or the human being, or any other reality. As Chapter 2 suggested in closing, this way of presenting the philosopher might have had to appear in a democracy, not because democratic culture mandated the image of the undistinguished citizen, but because the new institutional order called for an exceptional normalcy among its members that led them to embrace what the outer democratic order considered normal.

Beyond the Theaetetus

The chapters before this one found the *Theaetetus*'s philosopher to be an unstable figure outside philosophical institutions, even if entering such institutions threatened his identity in another way. This chapter brought the tension into a cultural context – if you see philosophy as spiritualized wrestling – as well as a political one. As one who belongs in the city (and speaking for now as if it had been settled that belonging in the gym makes a good metaphor, among Greeks, for civic membership), the philosopher risks being representative in a featureless fashion. As anything else – unschooled? but anyway choosing to take on the maddened legacy of Socrates instead of a *sô-kratês* made *sô-phrôn* – the philosopher risks losing citizenship altogether, as the mythic bandits did whose death became the condition for the possibility of (other people's) citizenship.

The chapters ahead will leave the *Theaetetus* and take up one theme among the many that inform these paradoxes of philosophical identity and philosophers' identifiability. The reference to wrestling and the *parergon* passage both proposed ways of dress, or uniforms, for philosophers. Philosophy conceived as wrestling calls for athletic uniforms, which is to say nothing at all, the undressed

body. The pre-eminence over philosophers that we find in the koruphaios is marked or signaled by clothing, and the skill at wearing this cloth that fits a proper and serious freeborn male citizen.

Whether or not the two uniforms are reconcilable to one another, they share one trait that threatens to make both of them impossible as markers. Anyone can strip naked. Everyone, or every proper male citizen, wraps his cloak around him rightly. What distinction is this that leaves no mark on the philosopher, or only the mark – if the statues of Plato's time are our guides – two eyebrows pulling together in serious thought?

The other philosophical identity does not disappear. Socrates as odd man out provides a lasting inspiration to the Cynics who flourished after his death. Zanker's study will inform later chapters by showing how the Socratic-Cynical emerged as one trope for philosophy to counterweigh against the trope of the philosopher as respectable citizen.

To speak of dress is to speak of fashion, and the question now for philosophers becomes how they might present themselves given the fact of fashion. How will they avoid fashionable dress? If fashion in the broadest sense implies mutual emulation among a civilization's members – a sense of the word that permits us to speak of ancient fashions in dress; a sense that permits such phrases as "intellectual fashion," which people use even when objecting to the thought of ancient fashion – then the continuing crisis of how to appear as philosophers (how, more or less, for philosophers to appear as what they are) becomes the question, or else allegorizes the question, how a philosopher navigates the currents of social reality. Where do philosophers belong in the known community of humans – or, if there is no place for them there, can they constitute a community on their own?

The Theaetetus's references to dress are one thread that runs from Part I of this book into Part II. More generally the book thus far has worked to uncover a concern, in Plato, over the nature of philosophical practice, for which the question of dress provides a concrete example. Even if no mention of clothing or nudity had come up in the *Theaetetus*, it would pose the figure of Socrates as uncertainly teacher or student, participant or loner. The question about Socrates is the question about a natural versus an institutional understanding of philosophical activity. What makes the examples about dress matter is that they too force the question of the natural as opposed to the institutional.

As it happens, I believe that dress is the best way for a modern non-philosopher to inquire into that very issue. Dress brings us to the matter of fashion, and fashion forces us to consider how we live uncertainly between nature and human institutions. This is the pivot between Plato's Theaetetus and the discussion of fashion. The *Theaetetus* opens out into the subject of dress and fashion in the sense that a door opens out into a vista. Even when the Theaetetus is not about ways of dressing, what it is thinking about throughout its first half, the philosopher ensconced in the tradition and schooling and yet apart from them, is a subject that invites further talk of institutions and their limits, or what people appeal to when they feel pressed to find justification outside institutions.

Notes

- 1 Pl. *Tht.*: relativism defeated, 161d–162a; Theodorus reluctant, 162a, see also 161b; "grab Theaetetus," 162a.
- 2 Pl. Tht.: wrestling rooms in Sparta, 162b; Socrates should wrestle with Theaetetus, 162b.
- 3 Pl.: "it was summer," Rep. 1.350d; description of the place they're sitting on a hot day, Phdr. 230b-c.
- 4 Pl. *Phdr.*: sloping land in myth, 247b; myth's pasturage, 248b; sweat, 248b, see also 251a, 254c.
- 5 Pl. Sym. 182b-c.
- 6 Xenophanes fr. 2, quoted in Ath. 10.5 413. See Bowra 1938; more recently Harris 2009 and Matthew 2012: ch. 8, though Harris is bent on seeing divisions within the tradition that begins with Xenophanes and opposes the adulation of Olympic heroes.
- 7 Euripides fr. 282, quoted in Ath. 10.4 413c–414c; the *Autolycus* is now lost. On Euripides see Bowra 1938: 257, and Harris 2009: 163–166. Bowra (1938) cites Isocrates, *Panegyricus*, as yet another Attic repetition of Xenophanes.
- 8 Pl. Ap. 36d. See Harris 2009 for what first appears to be a rival reading, according to which Socrates appropriates the idea with a "twist." "Socrates emphasizes the city's welfare while paradoxically denying possession of sophia" (167). But a twist is not a turn, and Socrates transforms the intellectual's rivalry with athletics without denying the challenge implied in that rivalry. For this appearance of Socrates as for Xenophanes and Euripides (or, his character in the Autolycus), thinkers do more for their cities than even the best athletes can.
- 9 Diog. Laert. 8.8.
- 10 Plato's wrestling metaphors: in *Tht.*, see Herrmann 1995; *Euthyd.*: participants taken for a fall, 277d; arguments "fall in the take down," 288a; *Meno*: wrestling for education in private home, 94d; *Laws:* on open road, 814d. Many of these references can be found in Reid 2008, which makes clear how Plato embeds the athletic ethos in philosophical dialectic.
- 11 Pl. Prt.: ground rules set by judges, 337a-b; choice of rhabdouchon "referee," 338a; setbacks like being struck hupo agathou puktou "by a good boxer," 339e.
- Pl.: generic reference to competitive sports: "let's be just like athletes [athlêtai] and surround this argument," *Phlb.* 41b; "We can't make excuses during the competition [agôn]," *Crat.* 421d; cf. 413a on a reference to the pit into which long-jumpers leapt. Hippias is like an athlete of the body, *Hip. min.* 364a; for the appearance of gymnastic training in a systematic body/soul analogy see *Grg.* 464b–465c, where however though the training profession does belong legitimately among pursuits of bodily excellence the analogous intellectual pursuit is not philosophy but legislation. Finally, *Lovers* 135c–137d compares the philosopher to the pentathlete, and although that dialogue has long been declared non-authentic, Annas (1985) mounts an argument for Plato's authorship that is worth minding.
- 13 Dialectic as gumnasia: Pl. Prm. 135c-d; Arist. Top. 101a27-34; also see 159a25, 161a25, 164a12.
- Isoc. Antid. 181, 266. Plutarch says he wrote this work at the age of eighty-two, which puts the date of composition at 354–353 BC (Plut. Isoc. 838a). In that year Plato was in his mid-seventies and so had probably already written the *Theaetetus*, though not too much earlier.
- 15 1 Cor 9:24–27.
- 16 Pl. Rep. 3.411e-412a. Thanks to Heather Reid for raising this point.
- 17 An alert early on, before more is made of this *gumnos* state. Some discussions, in art history but not only there, insist on the distinction between "nude" and "naked." I do not see that distinction informing my inquiries, so I will use the words interchangeably.

- 18 Sparta: origin of nudity, see chapters below; "law is their lord," Herod. 7.104.4; *rhêmasi*, ibid. 7.228.2; wearisome discipline, Thuc. 2.39.1.
- 19 Pl. Tht. 169a-b.
- 20 Pl. Tht.: nosos, 169b; "mighty love," 169c; "thousands of Heracleses," 169b.
- 21 Pind. Pyth. 9.
- 22 Plut. Thes. 24.1, Diamant 1982; see Walker 1995: 195–200 on the legend's becoming accepted as historical fact.
- 23 Plut. Thes.: Procrustes, 11.1; Skiron, 10.1; parallel to Heracles, 11.1
- Theseus outwrestling Cercyon, Plut. *Thes.* 11.1; Antaeus and Cercyon thugs, Pl. *Laws* 796a; leg holds, scholiast on *Laws* 796 (Theseus invented wrestling by hand, Cercyon having wrestled "by the leg"); Theseus and *technê* and teaching of wrestling, Paus. 1.39.3. For other accounts of Theseus and the skill in wrestling see Tyrrell 2004: 108; on Plato and brutal ways of wrestling, Gardiner 1905: 27.
- 25 Cercyon's palaistra: before Plato, Bacchyl. 18.25; to late antiquity, Paus. 1.39.3.
- 26 Socrates never leaving Athens, Pl. Cri. 52b, Phdr. 230d; gymnasia as staged wilderness, Sansone 1988: 87–88, but fundamentally passim.
- 27 Pl. Prt. 320c-322d.
- 28 Antaeus: *kalyx krater*, in the Louvre, accession number G 103; cruder red-figure, Museo Naxionale Cerite, Cervetri, Italy; amphora by Michigan Painter, in Tampa Museum of Art (Tampa 86.29; Beazley Archive Number 351170).
- 29 Skiron: red-figure cup (attributed to Onesimos), in the Louvre, accession number G 104; Douris cup, British Museum (1843.11–3.13; Beazley Archive Number 205091); *kalyx*, British Museum (GR 1850.3–2.3).
- 30 Ocean: Hom. Il. 14.201, 14.302; Pl. Tht. 153a, 160d, 180d.
- 31 Pl.: Ti. 40e, see also Hes. Theog. 133, 136; Pl. Crat. 402b-c. Plato probably knows "at least two different Orphic Theogonies," D'Alessio 2004: 29n43.
- 32 Ocean and Orphism, D'Alessio 2004: 29. "In the Orphic and in the Iliadic traditions it was impossible to do without Ocean." Pherecydes of Syros: and Homer on Ocean, Clem. Al. Strom. 6.9; mê muthikôs panta legein "not saying everything mythically," Arist. Metaph. 13.1091b9. On the problem with Ocean in Pherecydes Kirk et al. 1983: 69. Granger (2007: 154) argues that Pherecydes significantly distinguished natural entities (like Ocean) from gods.
- Ocean: body of water surrounding earth, Herod. 2.23, 3.115, 4.36; Pl. *Ti.* "Atlantic," 25d; *thalatta* outside Europe, Arist. *Mete.* 2.5 362b29, 1.13 350a23; Ocean a way that the ancients *ainittantai* "riddle," Arist. *Mete.* 1.9 347a6–7; cf. Romm 1992: 12–13, 21n37.
- 34 Doxography: Mann 1996, Mansfeld 1986; no doxography in Plato, Mansfeld 2014; history of philosophy as opposed to teleology, Collobert 2002.
- 35 History of philosophy as "record of human error," Kelley 1996: 122; "fashions" of a place, Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, II.xxviii.10.
- The character is called Professor, in the play My Head Was a Sledgehammer. "I want to be a place through which truth passes. But when it passes through ME stripping off its protective cloak Ah, but why do I wear my protective cloak?" Foreman 1995: 200.
- 37 Pl. Tht. 155c.
- 38 Pl. Tht. 155d.
- This view of the tradition is minimal, neutral between two visions of the philosophical past that one might attribute to Plato: as a sequence that leads dialectically to the Platonic synthesis, or as a stalled squabbling *stasis*. Boys-Stones (2010) presents the former as standard reading but argues for the latter. In my opinion both theories of the tradition fail to acknowledge the more fundamental conflict powering the *Theaetetus*, between a ("Socratic") wish to ignore philosophy's history and the ("Platonic") effort to join that history, whether as family member in it or antagonistic to it.

- 40 Arist. Metaph. 1.982b12–19. The full passage reads: "Through wondering [dia to thaumazein] people both now [nun] and at first [to prôton] began [êrxanto] to philosophize, originally [ex archês] wondering [thaumasantes] at the absurdities [atopôn] at hand ... [such as astronomical movements] and the origin of everything [pantos]. The one who is perplexed [ho aporôn] and wondering [thaumazôn] considers himself ignorant which is also why the myth lover [philomuthos] is in a way [pôs] a philosopher [philosophos], for the myth is made up of wonders [thaumasiôn]." For the multiplicity of things Aristotle means by archê see Metaph. 5.1012b34–1013a24.
- 41 See Hes. Theog. 255, 760, regarding Hesiod on Thaumas and Iris.
- 42 Readings of Iris: Chappell 2004: 72n49; Iris and eirein, Pl. Crat. 408b. Feldman (1934) speaks of Iris's act of bringing, and the context in Theogony shows how relevant that attribute is. She brings the water of Styx that the gods swear on. Is this akin to saying that after we see a wonder we look for a criterion of truth that will determine its nature? This reading is compelling but ignores Iris's rainbow. It also has the disadvantage of being arcane. Rainbow as appearance alone, Burnyeat 1990: 277n12.
- 43 Hes. *Theog.*: Thaumas son of Pontus, 237; Pontus father of monsters, 270–336. See Clay 1993. Monsters belong to Pontus, ibid.: 107.
- Hes. *Theog*.: Iris daughter of Electra, 265–266; Electra's parents Ocean and Tethys, 255–260; Ocean as streams of apparently fresh water, 790–791. On Pontus versus Ocean as salt opposed to fresh water, Clay 1993: 107n9.
- Harpies: sisters of Iris, Hes. *Theog.* 265–266; sisters fleet-footed, *Theog.* 266–269; carrying people off, Hom. *Od.* 1.241, 14.371, 20.78; steal Phineas's food, Aesch. *Phin.* fr. 142 = Ath. 10.18 421, Aesch. *Eum.* 50; punishment for divulging prophecy, Ap. Rohd. 2.178–186.
- 46 Of references to the *Theaetetus* that mention the Harpies, I know only one that asks what Harpies might signify as Iris's sisters for the meaning of philosophy: Rubenstein 2008: 11–12. For Rubenstein Harpies are the *unnoticed* daughters of Thaumas, repressed by Socrates in his quest to make Iris the symbol of his own activity. Whether or not this is completely right it commendably calls attention to the theme of publicity and secrecy.
- 47 Hom. Od.: Iros, 18.1–124; beaten by Odysseus, 18.95–100.
- 48 Hom. *Il.*: teras to mortals, 11.27; Athena among Achaeans, 17.547–549.
- 49 John Sallis's work alerted me to the role of the *teras* in Pl. *Tht*. My comments on Iris are intended to harmonize with Sallis 1995; also see Sallis 2005.
- 50 See e.g. Hom. *Il*.12, a teras (209) that is pelôron (202); likewise *Il*. 5, ll. 742 and 741.
- Teras and thauma together: Hom. Il. 2.320–5 "we marvel" at a teras; Pind. Pyth. 1.25–6, Mount Etna "a marvelous wonder" [teras ... thaumasion]; Herod. 4.28.2, among Scythians thunderstorm in winter thômazesthai "is wondered at" as a teras; Pl. Hip. mai. 283c teras legeis kai thaumaston "You are saying something freakish and marvelous."
- 52 Curiosity among ancients, Barton 1993; monster market, Plut. Mor. 520c, see also Barton 1993: 86; stupidam curiositatem, Tert. Ad nat. 2.4.14, Barton 1993: 91.
- 53 Artem. 3.32.
- 54 Pl. Tht.: eidôlon, 150d; anemiaion, 151e.
- 55 Teras in Pl.: Euthyd. 296c, Hip. mai. 283c, Prm. 129b, Phd. 101b, Phlb. 14e, Prt. 91d.
- 56 Pl. Crat. 393b, 394a.
- 57 Aeschin. Ctes. 3.111.
- 58 Pl. *Tht.* rhetoricians: versus philosophers, 172c–d; performing for awards, 172e; constraints on speech, 172d–e.
- 59 Pl. *Tht.* philosophers: "like us," 172d; their *koruphaios*, 173c; free not slave, 172c–d, 175d–176a; Thracian slave girl, 174a.
- 60 Pl. *Tht.* philosophical leaders: and the way to court, 173d; "neither see nor hear," 173d; no *onar* "dream" of symposia, 173d; don't know they don't know, 173e.

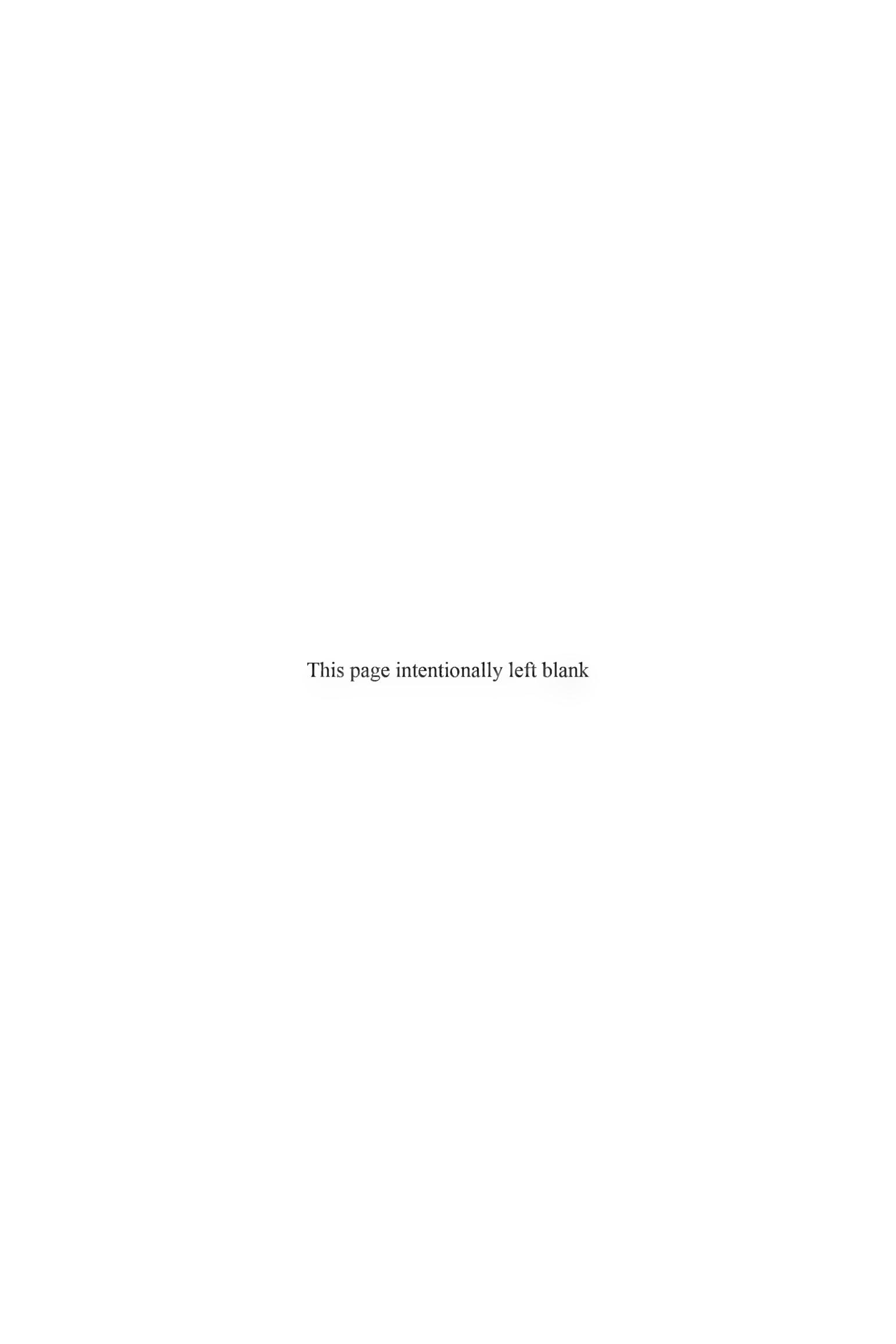
- 61 Pl. *Tht.*: neighbor as *thremma*, 174b; power like swineherd's, 174d; becoming like a god, 176a–b. For Platonic references to becoming divine see *Rep.* 613a–b, *Sym.* 207d, *Ti.* 89e. Annas (1999: 52–71) reminds us that "middle Platonism" as we call the tradition that existed during late Hellenistic and early Roman times, between the old Academy and the rise of neo-Platonism saw the divinization of the (philosophical) human as central to Plato's ethics; see Russell 2005: 138–165.
- 62 Pl. *Tht.*: wealth like nothing much, 174e; grand genealogies likewise, 174e–175a; reference to Herod. 2.143.
- 63 Pl. Tht. scholê: in parergon, 172d, 175c; looking back, 187d; on Ephesian philosophers, 180b.
- 64 Among recent inquiries into this question see Giannopoulou 2013 and especially Sedley 2006.
- 65 Pl. *Tht.* philosophers: and being, 172d; and "what human is," 174b; and "justice itself," 175c.
- 66 See Chappell 2004: 127–128 for a summary of this interpretive debate as it applies to the *parergon*, interpreters weighing the apparent Form references I have listed. Chappell cites significant responses from Cornford (1957: 85n1, 86n1), Burnyeat (1990: 38), McDowell (1973: 177).
- A related anecdote about Plato also implies this project of defining the human. Arist. *Top.* speaks of *anthrôpos* as a "rational mortal animal" that is moreover "capable of receiving thought and knowledge." Why that additional phrase instead of only "rational mortal animal"? Because (according to Philoponus, Eustratius, and Ioannes Doxapatros, all three commenting on Aristotle's definition) Plato had found the body of a dead nymph, or had heard about a *daimôn* found dead on the island of Samos. Given a dead spirit, a divinity could be rational and mortal; but it would not need educating. Riginos 1976: 149–150.
- 68 Pl. Ap. 39c-d.
- 69 Pl. Tht. 175e.
- 70 Pl. Tht. 175e-176a.
- 71 Ar. Birds 1567–1569. In Stephen Halliwell's translation this foreign god is described as "struggling with a Greek cloak that is unfamiliar to him." Halliwell 1998: 72.
- 72 Pl. Sym. 174a.
- As reported at (among other places) People.com (http://www.people.com/people/a rticle/0,1194756,00.html).
- 74 Pl. Ap.: 5 minas not much, 20c; 1 mina all Socrates can afford, 38b.
- 75 Thuc. 1.6. On the status of the himation see below on Alcibiades and Aeschines.
- 76 See the nickname "Olympian" that Pericles was given (Ar. Ach. 530), in recognition of his detachment. Later centuries exaggerated this persona into legend (see Plut. Per.), but the legend must have had its beginnings in considerable patrician reserve.
- 77 Plut. Alc.16.1; see also Demosthenes On the False Embassy, whose caricature of Aeschines pictures him again in the agora wearing a himation that hangs down to his ankles: Dem. 19.314. Geddes 1987: 312.
- 78 Hand outside cloak: Pericles and self-control, Aeschin. *Tim.* 1.25. The speech is dated to 346 because it follows the events of that year involving Aeschines and a delegation to Philip. Plato died around that same year. Phocion's cloak, Plut. *Phoc.* 4.2.
- 79 Aeschin. Tim. 1.26.
- 80 "Arist." Const. 28.3.
- 81 Theophr. *Char.* 4.4–5.
- 82 Ar. Birds 1570; Geddes 1987: 312.
- Hecat. in Jacoby 2004: I, F345. See entries on *doulôn polis* "city of slaves" in Steph. Byz. and in *Suda*. Aristotle considers and rejects the possibility that a gathering of slaves would count as a *polis* in the first place which suggests that he had heard of such a thing: *Pol.* 3.9 1280a32.

- 84 Quoted in Ath. 11.120 509c-d.
- 85 Pl. Ap. 17d–18a.
- 86 Zanker 1995: no intellectual as such, 43; caricature of a sophist, 33; "never a young philosopher," 22.
- 87 Zanker 1995: 58-60.
- 88 Zanker 1995: bust of Plato, 70–76; philosophers and serious citizens, 74; Plato "simply as a good Athenian citizen," 76.

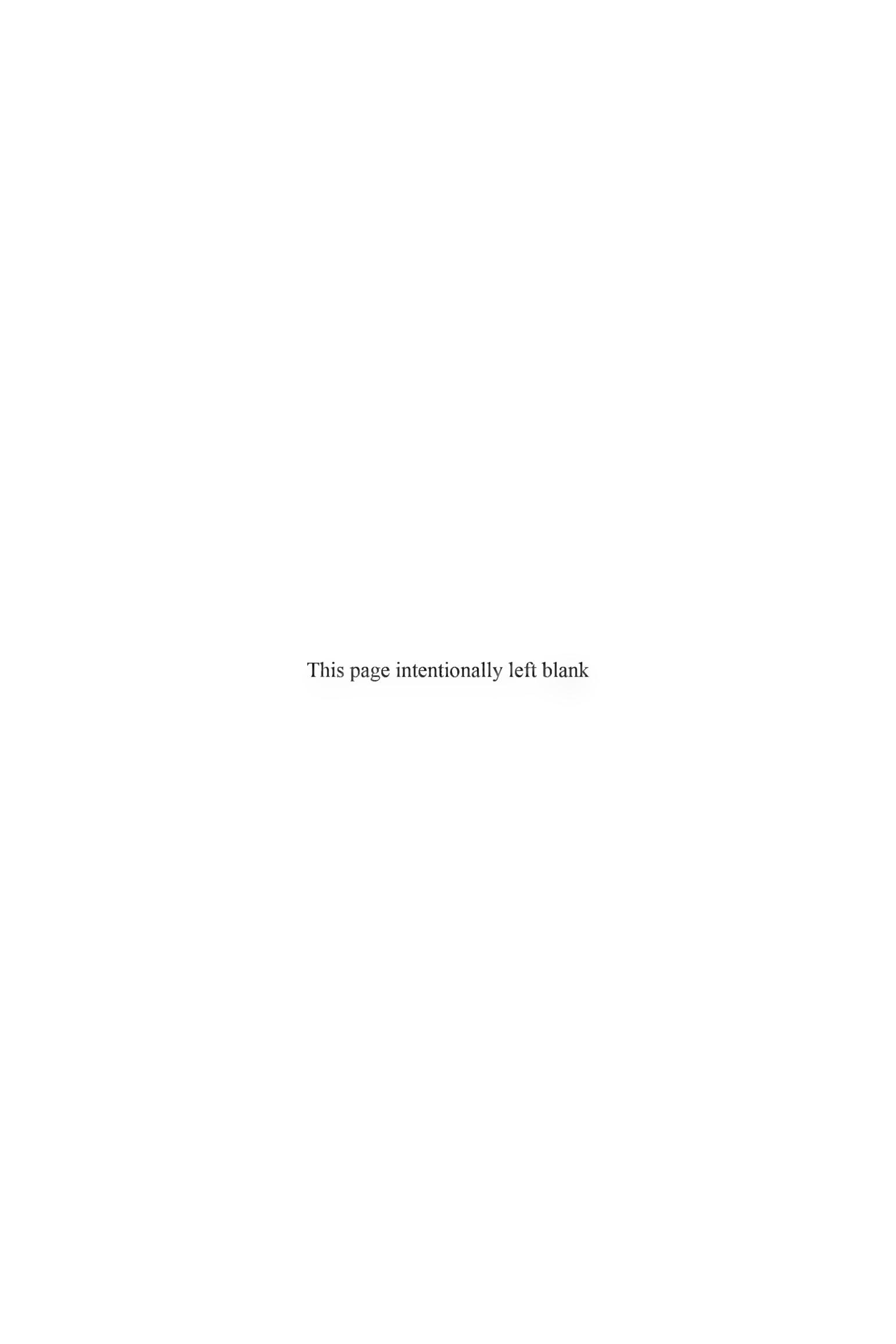
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Part II Philosophy regarding fashion



4 Fashion in philosophy

With the idea of philosophy as an identity comes the possibility of philosophers' identifying themselves as the beings they are. If a philosopher is something one is, it is something one can appear to be, or something one can appear as. To speak of a profession is to be able to imagine a professional representation of oneself, one that may well mean costume or dress.

Is there room, in Plato's evocation of a fledgling institutionalized philosophy, for the implication that philosophers have and wear a uniform? If not a fashion for philosophers, could there be what is known today as an anti-fashion?

Starting with such questions about the *Theaetetus* – spun from threads in that dialogue's argument, but also spun off from the dialogue – the rest of this book will then find its way back to Plato and the *Theaetetus*, and the philosopher who is to be identified by something equivalent to standing naked at the gymnasium. But returning to the scene of Theodorus being rebuked by Socrates will take some turns of reasoning and historical reorientation that occupy this part of the book. The present chapter will look at how philosophers have treated fashion, while the next one takes up what philosophy finds more congenial about anti-fashion. Finally (rounding out Part II in Chapter 6) I will argue that questions about fashion are not as out of place in antiquity as a historically minded conscience might incline someone to say.

With those parts of the argument done, the next (the last) part of the book can then go back to the *Theaetetus* and the nudity in philosophy.

But this book may have come before readers who find so much talk of fashion to be other than philosophy. (Is it anthropology of knowledge? Literary interpretation?) Reading Plato is well and good, they might say. Even reading him peculiarly belongs within the discipline. Does fashion have a place in the same discussion?

Facing such a reader, I could not deny that borders exist around philosophy. Nor would I deny that it matters to philosophy to monitor those borders, declaring some areas to be rightly philosophy's territories and seeing others as foreign land. After all the theme of this book just is the persistence and inventiveness of philosophers' impulse to mark off what they do as distinct. That impulse led, or leads, to philosophy's making a profession of itself. If a book with that orientation says anything true, it must run the risk of being penned out of philosophy's homeland.

Maybe it will make peace with a reluctant reader if I agree that the fashion-defining gestures of philosophers do not belong in the interior of philosophy – assuming for the sake of argument that the subject possesses center and periphery. (It might not be a remarkable fact about philosophy that its practitioners regularly identify certain questions and claims as central as they do. On the other hand maybe it is. Does anthropology have a center? What would be the center of mathematics? To say that the center of psychology is the brain sounds like making an unwitting joke.) Then maybe what is being identified in Plato, though not only in him, is a feature of philosophy's confrontation with what lies beyond its doors. We are told that tribes sometimes come into existence only after a non-national people meets the representatives of a state. This people might choose to organize in order to fight back against the state; or the state demands a body to meet with and sign treaties with. Then a tribe appears where there had been no need of such a thing.

Maybe some analogy holds for the philosophical tribe, that it creates itself not from center outward but inward from its periphery. And if not describing philosophy as such I can hope to be responding to philosophy's manner, perhaps its most characteristic manner, of meeting the rest of the world.

Fashion thinking

In the *Theaetetus* Socrates speaks of throwing the *himation* or cloak over one shoulder as if that action were a natural example of *savoir faire*. The philosopher can wrap the cloak but his courtroom rival does not know how. Similarly in the *Republic* the bald tinker recently suited up in fine cloth registers as an arriviste because a gentlemanly wardrobe marks the man. This bald upstart calls the philosophical pretender to mind inasmuch as the first impression that either one makes will not last. You can always tell a philosopher, and the knowledge that defines him is analogous to (therefore aptly pictured by, allegorized in) knowledge of how to wear a man's clothes, whatever species of knowledge that is; as if the philosopher resembled the fashion expert.

The two images of suitable dress are rare in the dialogues by comparison with the sight of philosophers naked. When Socrates rebukes Theodorus for following the conversation as a spectator, jumping in and philosophizing is akin to stripping at the gymnasium to wrestle. The *Charmides* contains the same parallel between philosophy and nakedness – implying not that those who philosophize also chance to undress themselves, so that philosophy and men's bodies happen to be found in the same places, but as if the philosophizing required the stripping; as if practicing philosophy any other way would be a fashion misstep.²

The staging of philosophy at Athenian gymnasia, both in Plato's dialogues and in Plato's real-life Athens, reinforces this idea of the first philosophical uniform. But before reading these pieces of evidence I have to address the word "fashion," which may sound ugly and accusatory in the present context. If it does seem bad to call nudity a philosopher's fashion, the sense of difficulty

begins with philosophy's hostility toward fashion. These are the last people who would want to have a fashion; for it is remarkable how often philosophers think of fashion as the antipodes to their profession. The metaphor "intellectual fashion" has only negative implications, identifying what someone reads or believes for flighty reasons.

Even a philosopher who resists intellectual cliché as extensively as Stanley Cavell does can use "fashion" to mean an antonym to serious thinking. Cavell's autobiography refers to the arrival of post-structuralism in America as a "phantasmagoria of fashion." In the same book he writes of "the causes and paces of intellectual and artistic and political fashion." However many things philosophy might be or can encompass, what is fashion or is in fashion must lie outside its reach.

The language of "fashion" also slips into an otherwise independent-minded critique of English-speaking analytic philosophy, in the charge by its author Aaron Preston that only "conformism" can account for analytic philosophy's empiricist prejudice. Simply because they constitute a professional body, philosophers have social motives for holding to the precepts of analytic philosophy. G. J. Warnock in mid-century had already said as much, that the antimetaphysical bent of the twentieth century may be "due to no more than a change of intellectual fashion."

This intellectual fashion that boils down to conformism is the opposite of what philosophy should be. Hence the punch in Preston's description of philosophy in the early twentieth century, "where so-called analytic philosophers pretended they had a well-founded view (sort of like the fabled emperor with no clothes, who pretended he was not walking around naked)." Not because the philosophers are academics, not at all for crass considerations of rank and tenure, but simply because they belong together in a professional body, philosophers hold to a consensus based on the wish to fit in. Is this what philosophical society might lead to? Can philosophers know themselves as philosophers only at the cost of their intellectual integrity? When philosophy sees fashion as its negation to the point of wondering whether philosophers can form anything resembling a city together, there won't be room even to entertain the thought of a philosopher's fashion.

Philosophy's resistance to fashion did not develop lately. A century before Cavell there was talk of fashion from George Santayana in this spirit: "Fashion is something barbarous, for it produces innovation without reason and imitation without benefit." And nearly a century before Santayana, Thoreau treated fashion as a symptom of civilization's disease. "We worship not the Graces, not the Parcae [Fates], but Fashion," he grieves in the first chapter of *Walden*. Fashion "spins and weaves and cuts with full authority," everything the Fates once did as they measured out a human life. From metaphor we decline into dull literalism. The fate whose authority philosophers once pondered has been supplanted, and literal spinners and snippers claim the same authority.

Thoreau mocks the command that fashion claims as if this were the new tyranny for philosophy to battle. Friedrich Vischer will continue the mockery

later in the nineteenth century as he contemplates language found in fashion magazines. He finds the magazines saying "one wears it in this way," and "it is permitted." Vischer asks, "Who is 'one'? ... Who permits? ... Indeed, they truly act as though they were the categorical imperative in person" – that being, perhaps, philosophy's implacable version of Fate. Just as Plato's tyrant in the Republic, the opposite extreme to the philosopher, compounds the sin of possessing an unbalanced tyrannical soul by seizing political power, this tyrant Fashion operates without reason and also commands whole nations. It operates free of philosophical oversight being far from philosophy, and yet it enters into the heart of life to occupy the place that belongs by rights to philosophy.

The emperor's new clothes

The fabled emperor alluded to in Preston's remark makes as hard a hit against philosophers as you can imagine. This archetypal story about fashion is also a terrific story about philosophy, the kind of story philosophy would want to tell, and fashion meets philosophy in the final scene. On one side we have the emperor on the runway enjoying the crowd's praise for his new outfit, even though the praise has no empirical grounds (he's wearing nothing: what could they be perceiving that's worth a word of praise?); on the other side a lone truth-teller who speaks up against the crowd and prevails just by virtue of being right.

Even the boy's specific words "There's nothing there" might stand as a summary of ground-clearing arguments that philosophers have used against imperious predecessors. There is no Form of the Good, no material substance, no causal force, nor any analytic truth. Amazing what lasting appeal one type of argument can have.

That this is *philosophy*'s fantasy becomes clear in the denouement to the story, when the boy's words prove to be not only true but instantly effective. Surely this is the implausible part of Andersen's story, the mass change of heart at the end. Emperors really do delude themselves, and crowds do humor their rulers, and children do break the rules of polite social pretending. But in real life the blunt truth does not elicit an answer "Why yes you're right." The elders do not suddenly realize that fingers are indeed the easiest way of picking up food, or that their guest has long sharp teeth like fangs. In life the child yields, not the social fiction. The contrary-to-fact ending in this story attests to the strength of the wish that is driving it, akin to the wish for philosopher-kings in whom wisdom and social influence cohabit together.

Trendiness as such is not the villain in philosophy's fantasy of itself. It seems to have to be the trendiness that has to do with clothes. But why should a fantasy about philosophy speak of dress rather than of food or drink, or music? This is not Andersen's doing. He wrote his story in the nineteenth century, but the basic plot appears in folktales dating far in the past, most of them stories about invisible turbans and robes. Andersen is merely following the tradition, and we do after him. We do not speak of the emperor's new wine, new math, or new historicism.

Is it because people can be snobs about styles of dress without knowing what they're talking about? People are snobbish about wine too, but there the skeptic is less confident of carrying the day. "I don't taste any minerality" sounds unpolished or lazy more often than it sounds perceptive. You don't get a medal for being dull of sense. Or, if the emperor had been persuaded to admire an adventurous string quartet, and during the performance one frank boy called out "This isn't an adventure, it's just violins," the crowd would not gasp and agree, nor would the emperor slink away shamed.

The story really works for clothing, as opposed to wine or music, because of the assumption that fashions in clothes are not about anything. Where fashion is concerned there is no such thing as the process of learning and nothing to be learned. Here it is telling that sources for this type of story also include a variant from India "The King and the Clever Girl," in which the clever girl tricks the king into pretending he has seen God. Maybe the crucial point of resemblance between the stories, the vanity that makes one pretend to see what cannot be seen, betrays the suspicion that knowledge regarding God is as impossible as knowledge of how to dress. An unschooled reaction reveals the truth when all schooling takes the form of the sales pitch that those visiting charlatans bamboozled the emperor with, which is a pretext of pedagogy enforced by the threat of being perceived as a philistine. That is all the schooling there can be in matters of fashion; the institutions governing fashion pass along a simulacrum of learning on topics that cannot be learned, by this means or by any other.

This is why it stings to think that the emperor, of all people, is striking the crowd's eye as something of a philosopher himself: naked, as the Greeks had once philosophized, and sure of being in possession of superior knowledge. This again is what makes fashion such an intolerable opposite to philosophy. Far from being content to live in its different manner, fashion seats itself on the throne that ought to have passed to philosophy.

Another feature of the Andersen tale might seem to be stacking the deck against fashion, multiplying unkind descriptions of the phenomenon even when those features contradict each other. The emperor's-new-clothes story identifies widespread agreement as the presenting symptom of fashion, and yet it characterizes fashionable dress as that which stands out in a crowd. How can both features of fashionable dress be true? On the one hand the emperor's clothes require unanimous approval, for after all they have nothing else to recommend them. A single dissenting voice undoes the delusion because only mutual agreement constituted the fashion to begin with.

And yet there is no denying that the emperor has distinguished himself. He is not trying to start a trend, certainly not trying to dress as others do. He parades not so that his subjects will wear the same finery they admire on him, but in order to set himself apart from them. The new clothes bring everyone together but also separate the emperor – first in glory, then as the object of ridicule.

Both motives sound right. People do agree on what is called fashionable, and they also do seek to stand out. It is not a contradiction in the story but a

paradox of social existence that dressing just as everyone else does will not cause you to be dressed *just so*. Fashion has to do with social like-mindedness, if Andersen's story speaks to the nature of fashion as I believe it to; but it also follows from the story that like-mindedness needs further explication.

Philosophy of fashion today

The impatience with fashion that philosophy voices, in its rare mentions of the subject, suggests that when philosophers said nothing at all about fashion they were still rebuffing it. The long silence is over now, with several philosophical treatments of fashion appearing in the past decade: books by Gilles Lipovetsky and Lars Svendsen, shorter pieces by Karen Hanson, one collection edited by Ronald Scapp and Brian Seitz, another collection by Jessica Wolfendale and Jeanette Kennett.¹¹

If treating a subject philosophically includes assessing the tradition's previous discussions of that subject, one may expect the looks at fashion that are emerging today to speak to philosophy's animus. As Hanson writes, "an account of philosophy's fear and hatred of fashion may reveal not only some neglected history of philosophy but also some of the subject's buried motivations." ¹²

One question is how the philosophers perceived fashion when they disparaged it. What, if anything, could be called the philosophical conception of fashion? The contemporary authors speak to this question with unequal success.

Svendsen at first suggests that philosophers ignore fashion because fashion is "the most superficial of all phenomena." Later speaking more precisely he equates fashion with a change in dress that is "sought for its own sake ... [and] takes place relatively frequently." He seems to be saying that the cyclical transformations of fashion are what render fashion superficial and therefore unfit for philosophical scrutiny. Although Svendsen spends less time than other commentators do examining philosophical objections to fashion, this characterization is the one he repeatedly appeals to, evidently because of Adorno's influence. ¹⁴ New fashions derive their value by virtue of being new and not also for any other reason. ¹⁵

The problem with this account is that built-in innovation will not suffice to explain philosophical resistance to fashion. Not many philosophers after Plato share Plato's objections to novelty and change. *That* current of philosophical thought has never been the mainstream. In any case Svendsen shares in the tradition's objections to fashion more than he resists or even diagnoses them. Focusing on change for its own sake as fashion's defining characteristic, he is bound to find it empty of content, and he does. And from the emptiness of fashion it is a short step, a step that Svendsen takes with alacrity, to the emptiness of modern people who follow fashion. The "fashion self" on his account exists without past or future, being nothing but a role-player possessed of merely transient identity. ¹⁶

(Laura Ashwell and Rae Langton pick up on this attack and raise the stakes. Their "Sensible Fashionista" has more autonomy than the "Servile Fashionista"; even so "there remains something slavish about her following of fashion."¹⁷)

Gilles Lipovetsky's debts to Michel Foucault make him harder to summarize. Those allegiances leave him torn between insisting on the historical emergence of fashion and claiming to have spotted its defining or essential features. In the historicist mode Lipovetsky is so devoted to exposing the fluidity of fashion's natures that he mainly castigates his predecessors for not having observed that fluidity. But this is a note that does not resonate. Even if philosophy is guilty of the essentialist bias that it is (by now so monotonously) accused of having, such a bias would only explain why philosophers describe fashion as they do, not why they should scorn it. Indeed if essentialists begin by denying the changeability of fashion, then they ought to see nothing in fashion to object to.

Meanwhile in an almost classical mode Lipovetsky harps on fashion's "endless metamorphoses" and "regular renewal," "perpetual change," "accelerated rhythms," above all "novelty," with the result that – like Svendsen – he can only explain a philosophical antipathy to fashion on the assumption of a philosophical antipathy to change that hasn't been seen for centuries. And one must bear in mind that not only fashion changes relentlessly in pursuit of novelty without telos. Living things evolve that way too; but only a few philosophers object to changes in species, and then for reasons other than the change as such.

Among these recent philosophers of fashion, Karen Hanson approaches philosophical responses to it the most diagnostically. She takes pains to describe fashion in a manner that makes sense of the tradition's resistance to it, as an art belonging to the surface of the body. Philosophy's queasiness about the body, with additional qualms about presentations of a *woman's* body, lies behind the shabby treatment it has given to fashion.

If there is a reason to add another dimension of analysis to Hanson's or Svendsen's, that is because certain comments that philosophers traditionally made about fashion imply a feature of it they objected to that is neither the fact of change in human dress nor the attachment of clothing to the body. To philosophers, fashions in dress have repeatedly betokened *human imitativeness*. Imitativeness is not the whole story of fashion, but it has been true enough to be taken as fashion's fundamental characteristic, and surprisingly often has been the basis for a philosopher's antipathy.

It is fair to add that Lipovetsky addresses one philosophical reading of fashion as imitation. He encounters that reading in the person of Gabriel de Tarde and takes it to task.²⁰ But Lipovetsky rarely widens his scope to associate imitation with any author besides de Tarde. He does not see imitativeness as a persistent philosophical complaint against fashion, so he never looks deeply into that failing on fashion's part. And his refutation only works against one form that fashion-imitativeness has taken, the form he finds in de Tarde, which is the imitation expressed by commoners who dress as their superiors do.²¹ Lipovetsky is right that fashion cannot be accounted for by underlings' mimicking overlords. But imitation does not have to work along that axis, and the imitativeness in fashion is likely to be more diffuse, as indeed the philosophers who spoke of fashion imitation have taken it to be.

Imitation according to the tradition

Philosophers before the present day who commented on fashion saw it as an imitative enterprise, not especially as a human enterprise given to fluctuations.²²

Santayana's comment "innovation without reason and imitation without benefit" may be the most vivid example. Taking fashion in a broad sense and pulling no punches, Santayana detects a fashion-following impulse in the modern West's appropriation of older arts and ideas. He continues:

It [sc. fashion] is characteristic of occidental society in medieval and modern times ... Our art, morals, and religion, though deeply dyed in native feeling, are still only definable and, indeed, conceivable by reference to classic and alien standards.

Innovating "without reason" already sets fashion apart from philosophy, which (one presumes) would innovate reasonably or *within* reason. It is not the innovation that Santayana takes issue with. If anything, his complaint about modern culture (the totality of which his word "fashion" embraces) is that it has not changed *enough*. The habit of imitation, whether of ancient models or foreign ones, kept the West from ever transforming itself as the project of modernity called on it to do.

Thoreau does not generalize about the fashion that modern culture really is at heart, maybe because he finds literal fashion in dress to be quite tyrannical enough. But then it's hard not to be a tyrant when human mimicry is as slavish as it is. "The head monkey at Paris puts on a traveler's cap, and all the monkeys in America do the same." Everything invites ridicule except for the sacred what is done.

Like shipwrecked sailors, [human beings] put on what they can find on the beach, and at a little distance, whether of space or time, laugh at each other's masquerade. Every generation laughs at the old fashions, but follows religiously the new.²⁴

What marks fashion is not the propensity to change but fealty to whatever one is now changing into. And Thoreau's mention of sailors might be underscoring the mass production of clothing, hence the universal uniformity in fashion. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the first ready-made clothing in the US was sold in "slop shops" where seamen bought their clothes.²⁵

The alternative for Thoreau, as for Santayana, is philosophy. The first chapter of *Walden* has already spoken of philosophers as the people who do not dress up. "The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward." What was true antiquely becomes an eternal principle within the same paragraph: "The philosopher ... is not fed, sheltered, clothed, warmed, like his contemporaries." Those "contemporaries" by implication are the type who dress alike.

An earlier sample of antipathy to fashion comes from Rousseau's *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*. For Rousseau too the pressure toward like-mindedness is the distinguishing characteristic of fashion. He opposes the *fashionista* to the true philosopher, not from any resistance to change in the philosopher, nor because of thoughts of the body, but in fear of the uniformity that attention to dress inspires.

How sweet it would be to live among us, if the external appearance always illustrated the inclination of the heart ... if the true philosopher were inseparable from the title of "philosopher"! But ... virtue rarely walks with pomp. Richness of clothing [la richesse de la parure] may herald a man of taste ... it is under the rustic outfit [l'habit rustique] of a laborer, and not under the gilding of a courtier, that one finds the power and vigor of the body. Fine dress is just as foreign to virtue, the power and vigor of the soul. The good man is an athlete who likes to fight naked [nu].²⁷

The impulse to fashion boils down to human imitativeness, inasmuch as society inclines toward unanimity. "Today ... a vile and deceptive uniformity [uniformité] reigns over our customs, and all minds seem to have been cast in the same mold ... One follows the general practice [des usages], never one's own genius [son propre génie]."²⁸

Eighteenth-century authors after Rousseau explain fashion with reference to the same motives that he identifies. Christian Garve writes, "Fashions are a result of man's social nature. People want to be uniform with one another." Adam Smith grounds fashion in "our disposition to admire, and consequently to imitate, the rich and great," positing the top-down species of imitation that Lipovetsky will attack. What the rich and the great wear "is the fashionable dress; the language of their conversation, the fashionable style." Similarly Kant's Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, in which fashion is vanity and Kant distinguishes it from taste, takes the interest in fashion to begin in people's comparing themselves to more important people (children to adults, those of low social rank to those of high rank), with the purpose of imitating the superiors' behavior.²⁹

Already for Locke it is either philosophy or fashion, not both. What he calls "the law of opinion or of reputation" ranks below divine and civil law; as I pointed out earlier, he calls this law of opinion "fashion." Along with other philosophers in the seventeenth century, Locke classified the history of philosophy with other studies of mere opinion, the history of thought implying no more than "the record of human error" and something philosophy must not be.

Conformity describes a state of agreement arrived at for whatever reason, very possibly a good one. Conformism implies agreement for its own sake and agreeability as principle. And whereas philosophers long ago stopped setting themselves against change, their objection to agreement for its own sake provides a clear and believable reason to resist fashion, or what they interpret fashion to be. Fashion as the gold standard of conformism is as toxic to thinkers' independence as gold is to their abstemiousness.

120 Philosophy regarding fashion

If philosophy sees its opposite in fashion defined as imitativeness, you might be tempted to understand that definition of fashion as a philosopher's concoction and fiction. But the essential imitativeness of fashion is a theme of popular writing as well. "Fashion in the final analysis is a social contract," as the legendary editor Diana Vreeland put the point. "It is a group agreement as to what the new ideal should be." Philippe Perrot, French historian of fashion, spells out the speculative form of that group agreement: "Everyone admires, desires, and deems beautiful ... what they think is admired, desired, and deemed beautiful by those whom they acknowledge as competent to designate the canons of beauty." And fashion magazines offer appeals to social consensus everywhere.

If fashion arbiter Nicole Kidman and style-setter-in-the-making Nicole Richie are wearing bold baubles – *and* they were on Marc Jacobs' runway – you know these necklaces are cool.

(Harper's Bazaar, September 2005, 161)

The mood this season is all dressed up. Better find someplace to go. (*In Style*, August 2005, 168)

Lace is everywhere this season – even, yup, in swimsuits.

(Glamour, May 2006, 263)

There's a reason why leggings are all over the place right now – they're that hot.

(Cosmopolitan, August 2006, 189)

What is fashionable is what people wear because other people wear it and not evidently for any other reason.

If anything the philosopher's diagnosis is a commonsense account of fashion, or it would be received as common sense if theorists were not looking for a more emblematically "philosophical" account. After all the sociality of fashion is close to tautologous, and ideas of "the social" identify its power with the impulse to mutual imitation.

John Greenwood, for one, a philosopher of the social, proffers a definition of "social facts" (which he presents as a version of a definition implicit in Durkheim) according to which such facts are

manners of acting, thinking and feeling engaged by individuals because and on condition that other members of a social group are represented as engaged in these (or other) ways of acting, thinking, and feeling.³³

Greenwood does not posit conformism in all societies; see below on the important parenthetical qualifier "or other" in his definition. Still, *imitation* is a good single word for most of the behavior that fits his description. To act as you understand others to be acting is on the whole to imitate them. If you act

as they are acting for a specific and substantive reason, you are still imitating them, just imitating for a good reason.

Although Greenwood's subject is the social as such, a footnote applies his account of social behavior to behavior in dress:

[F]ashion represents perhaps the purest – if also the least noble – form of socially held or engaged cognition, emotion and behavior. Certain fashion items (e.g. rings through the nose) are worn for no reason other than the fact that other members of a social group are represented as wearing them.³⁴

Social behavior might include more complex and antagonistic responses to the social group's actions than mimicry, but in the matter of fashion Greenwood too sees the individual's relation to the collective as mimetic.

Yet again the philosopher's fashion is not necessarily being depicted as changeable. Mutual imitation by a large group's members could make for uniformity over time as well as across the group. Consider Western men's trousers. They are worn today because they were worn yesterday. The strength of social pressure toward conformity simply becomes more visible the more often customs change. Because trouser legs seem to have always been here, one imagines a functional justification (warmth, mobility). If their lengths changed every couple of years, one would be changing to the new kind of trousers for the purpose of keeping up, and everyone would know the reason why everyone else was switching over.

Beau Brummell, beyond imitating

Seeing fashion as imitation permits a one-dimensional story about why so many philosophers have rejected the very idea of fashion. Going along with the crowd means failing to reason, so philosophy in obedience to reason must stake itself to whatever is not fashion. Up to a point this is the message of the emperor's new clothes, and the philosopher's desire at all costs to be the boy with the naked truth not the emperor with naked flesh. But only up to a point, given that the emperor's-new-clothes story depicts fashion simultaneously as the impulse toward unanimity *and* the drive toward differentiation. Is this the kind of contradiction that occurs when one is desperate to insult, that one piles on incompatible bad qualities? How can the desire to social sameness and the drive to difference both be at work?

But then Georg Simmel also said, writing of fashion, that social existence is a battleground between forces of assimilation and the forces of differentiation opposed to assimilation.³⁵ The philosophers who understand fashion entirely in terms of unanimity and mass mutual mimicry are describing it incompletely. It is as if such theorists not only appealed to the timeworn metaphor of stagecraft to describe social existence but also made every participant in the metaphorical play a member of its chorus. The chorus's people do watch and copy one another (practicing mimesis in Plato's vocabulary, Dionysian assimilation in

Nietzsche's). But the tragic theater also contains Thespian performances of actors setting themselves *apart* from the chorus in Apollonian differentiation, and the world is a stage in this way too, containing behavior that while cognizant of what everyone else is doing pursues an indirect and sometimes antagonistic dialogue with the social consensus.

The conflicting drives to assimilation and to differentiation coexist in a fashion adept of the order of Beau Brummell.³⁶ Brummell famously said that "if John Bull turns round to look at you, you are not well-dressed; but too tight, too stiff, or too fashionable." Up to a point that dictum is a democratic principle rebuking the fairy-tale emperor. His vanity is repellent to Brummell, ³⁷ who aims at dressing so flawlessly as to render his costume invisible in a more refined respect.

(The invisibility is related to the nudity of classical male statues, as later chapters will argue. Brummell's own book *Male and Female Costume* sought to link the principles of British dress to Greek and Roman practices.)

And yet even when recognizing the spirit of unremarkability at work in Brummell's dress it would be obtuse to deny the pains that he took to stand out. As a young man in London he spent hours bathing and dressing to make sure that every turn of the cuff and twist of the neckcloth were as they ought to be. He did not look right by accident. When asked why he had engaged his intelligence to such vapid purpose, Brummell allegedly said "that he knew human nature well enough to realize such was his best and fastest route 'to separate himself from the ordinary herd of men." "38

If social imitativeness produces a herd, the behavior of those who are trying to be fashionable incorporates a reaction against the mass action that acknowledges the herding that is taking place while also aiming for differentiation from the crowd. As Rebecca Arnold writes in connection with eighteenth-century France, "fashion went beyond a process of simple emulation ... Since the Renaissance, aspirations to individuality [and] aesthetic sensibilities ... played a part."³⁹

Moving away from the consensus, being different, is likely to look like following a principle that stands independent of custom. That is to say, it stands to reason, and one is tempted to believe, that deviating from mass behavior can only be the result of following a non-social principle, maybe an eternal one. If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs, they will think you must have a reason. This is why Barbey d'Aurevilly, who soon after Brummell's death wrote a philosophizing appraisal of him, portrayed Brummell's "dandyism" as an appeal to super-social standards. Again fashion seems to have its eyes on philosophy's throne. "As the philosophers erected a superior obligation challenging the law, so the Dandies, of their own authority, proclaimed a rule above those which swayed the most patrician world." "

Brummell's allusion to that stuffy English stereotype "John Bull" is hardly the language with which one defers to mass taste. Nor is the final warning in his aphorism, that one will err by dressing "too fashionably." To see excessive fashionableness as a danger, one needs to have achieved some distance from the trends that everyone else is following. Does it follow that Brummell guided his own actions with a rule independent of the fashion rules that everyone else was imitating?

In his maneuvering around fashionableness Brummell exhibits a hyper-conscious variety of fashion thinking that d'Aurevilly defines with acuity:

Dandyism ... plays with the regulations, but at the same time pays them due respect. It suffers from them, and avenges itself by submitting; it even demands them again after it escapes them; it dominates and is dominated by turns.⁴¹

Brummell acknowledges the crowd by prescribing that one blend in with it, while sneering at that same crowd in the person of John Bull. You need to become John Bull to the degree that *he* then can't tell the difference between himself and you, while you – understanding the full scope of what Bull can and cannot perceive – evaluate yourself according to your difference from him.

Brummell's idea of separating from the crowd is meant to be compatible with attention to what the crowd is doing, as it would not be if he had a non-social guide to dress in mind. Insofar as the dandy exemplifies fashion consciousness, that consciousness consists in a reflexivity and reactivity that social imitativeness alone cannot account for.⁴² Thus a recent discussion by two philosophers says, "Fashionistas are simultaneously conformists and individualists" – although the authors then fall back on changeability as their ultimate explanation too. "Invention and convention are not opposing forces, but stages in an ongoing cycle of change."

Lipovetsky is at his best on the activity constituting fashion consciousness that makes it reflexive and reactive. If you set aside Lipovetsky's forced good humor about the "advance" of democracy via contemporary fashion, what remains is a more modest point, that fashion resides in "the play of freedom ... possibilities of nuance and gradation, opportunities to adapt or reject innovations." The drive to express one's individuality or personality brings people "to accept or reject the latest fad, to adapt it for themselves, to exercise a personal preference for one brand over another, for different shapes and cuts." Social imitation may be a necessary condition, but taken by itself imitation will not account for the phenomena of fashion. 45

Brummell's fashion thinking does not contradict Greenwood's definition of the social either. That definition expressly allows for complications in one's reply to what other people do, for those other members of the social group don't have to be engaged in the *same* ways of acting, thinking, and feeling. The definition only says that they are represented "as engaged in these (or other)" behaviors. Greenwood's note to the parenthesized "or other" phrase explains that those words cover

cooperative, competitive and combative forms of thought, feeling, and behavior: where I push (only) when you pull, where I return (only) when you serve, where I fight you (only) when you insult me, and so forth.⁴⁶

If you are the fashion maven who figures from the popularity of cashmere sweaters that their time will soon pass, dropping the sweaters from your

wardrobe is a social act as much as adding them because of their new popularity had been. Other people's way of dress is shaping yours. It is a second-order social action as opposed to naively imitative, but no less social for being reflexive.

The trouble for philosophical diagnoses of fashion comes not when they call fashion a social phenomenon, in other words, but with the further step of translating social phenomena into exclusively mimetic acts.

The foreigner

The foreigner who keeps appearing in philosophical descriptions of fashion serves as a marker of the imitative model's popularity, if also a sign of its limitations.

The foreigner turns up by surprise in *Walden*'s paragraphs about clothing. Thoreau has been attributing the effectiveness of fashion to human imitativeness. New styles appear and everyone apes them. But where did those new styles come from? Well-dressed people resemble shipwrecked sailors who "put on what they can find on the beach." Remarkably this paragraph dwells on the way that one nation ridicules what another nation wears – remarkably, because although the sailors distinguish their own clothes from strangers' clothes, they are wearing what is not native to them. The clothes were on the beach, and being shipwrecked means not being on the beaches of home. Fashions may as well have fallen from the sky. It is not as if one's own people invented these styles – though it's also not as if the clothes had grown on the beach, for these are not natural coverings. Strangers left their clothes on the beach for the sailors to find. (If Thoreau's example owes something to the new popularity of slop shops with their ready-made clothing, what the sailors wear really could look as if it had fallen from the sky, because it wouldn't quite fit any of them.)

In the paragraph preceding this image of sailors, Thoreau identifies the origin of fashion according to a different metaphor, though to the same effect. He begins with what a "tailoress" tells him: "They do not make them so now." This vague "they" that is everywhere and nowhere governs human life as if it were Fate; so Thoreau says he would like to find out "by what degree of consanguinity *They* are related to *me*, and what authority they may have in an affair which affects me so nearly." The tastemakers are not his people. He rejects their authority over his wardrobe by denying their claim to relation with him.

But if, as Thoreau's rhetoric implies, no degree of consanguinity links him to those who would dictate the style of each year's clothes, that is to say that he and they have no common ancestor. They are foreigners. Fittingly this same paragraph speaks of the French monkey's cap that American monkeys copy, the lead again coming from somewhere else. "French" is one of the words that Americans use for outsiders. In a previous generation they might have said "English," for in the years leading up to the American Revolution colonials who resented British imports made a public enterprise of homespun cloth that Americans could produce by themselves, shearing their native sheep and harvesting native flax. Thomas Paine urged his fellow colonials to stop being "the servile copyists of foreign manners, fashions, and vices." Although Thoreau asks for

more than economic independence, his impatience with fashion partly echoes that earlier campaign for local dress. It would be echoed again at the end of the nineteenth century when Americans boycotted clothes from France in connection with the Spanish-American War.⁵¹

Finding a foreign source for fashionable clothing goes back at least as far as the prophet Zephaniah, some years before Plato, who calls God's punishment down upon "princes and sons of the king" and "all who are dressed in foreign clothing." It is not only Thoreau who prophesies as Zephaniah does. Santayana worries about "alien standards," and Rousseau says that sophisticated dress is *étrangère* "foreign" to virtue.

Even in Andersen's fairy tale, the fine cloth that no one else can see is brought to the emperor by visitors, which is to say not natives.

And Plato's *Republic* blames outsiders for that other kind of pernicious imitation, in an episode already called to mind in this book's Introduction. When Socrates first concludes that their good city will have no mimetic poetry in it, he pictures a would-be peddler of such verse arriving at the city gates, only to be sent off again.⁵³

Reading such passages as xenophobia misses the theoretical need for the foreigner in philosophers' accounts of fashion, you might say as a posit. The theory, and not mere human prejudice, calls for the foreigner's participation in fashion as villain. If you are accustomed to seeing fashion as herd mentality, you need a source for the innovations that your neighbors are *ex hypothesi* too passive to provide. For on the view of fashion as simple imitation, it is as if human beings did nothing to invent new ways of dress; as if there were no Beau Brummells. The fashion world swells full of copies for which there has never been an original. And like the serpent in the garden, who accounts for clothing by another route, the foreigner at the couturier's incites a lamentable action that the governing picture of human behavior cannot explain otherwise. When fashionable dress is foreign dress, it becomes possible to ferry all stylistic invention over the border, away from the homeland to an inexplicable external place.

Needless to say this foreigner is a desperate measure. Eventually someone will travel to another country and then have to explain where those people found *their* clothes. The theory would come to a quick embarrassing halt if its purpose were to explain where new clothes as such come from. Because the point is to characterize fashionable people and not the source of their fashions, the foreigner is no more than the theory's fig leaf – if also not much better than a fig leaf at covering an ultimate cause. What is at stake is philosophy's need for an enemy opposite. The under-described foreigner is not the unphilosophical one; the imitators at home very much are.

Notes

1 This chapter is adapted from Nickolas Pappas, "Fashion Seen as Something Imitative and Foreign," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48 (2008), 1–19, from which it is much changed. Special thanks for his encouragement and comments go to Peter Lamarque, who was editor of the *British Journal of Aesthetics* when that journal published the paper.

- 2 Pl. Chrm. 154d-e. See Chapter 8 below for discussion of this scene.
- 3 Cavell 2010: "The ensuing, unchecked phantasmagoria of fashion remains," 451; "to understand the causes and paces of intellectual and artistic and political fashion ... what perspective might I have or claim from which to identify and measure the costs of fashion?" 305; also see "a tradition that could hardly be less in fashion," 502. For insightful comments on images of literal clothing (especially jeans) in the autobiography, see Forrester 2011: 173–174.
- 4 Preston 2005.
- 5 Warnock 1958: 123; quoted in Preston 2005: 292.
- 6 Preston 2005: 296.
- 7 Santayana, The Life of Reason, III, ch. 7 ("Reason in Religion"), par. 15 (Santayana 1905).
- 8 Henry David Thoreau, Walden, ch. 1 ("Economy"), par. 38.
- 9 Vischer 2004 [1878]: 159; emphasis in original.
- 10 For one catalogue of the tale type see Ashliman 2014. The story appears in Swynnerton 1892: 56–62.
- 11 Hanson 1990, 1998; Lipovetsky 1994; Svendsen 2006; Scapp and Seitz 2010; Wolfendale and Kennett 2011. Scapp and Seitz 2010 includes a piece that later became part of the present book.
- 12 Hanson 1998: 159.
- 13 Svendsen 2006: fashion "the most superficial," 7; change "sought for its own sake," 22.
- 14 Adorno (1984) does not say much about fashion, but when he does he subsumes it under the category of the temporal. Thus "[artists] pay tribute to fashion by instinctively dating their products," as if datedness (newness as well as once-newness) were the essence of fashion (275). Svendsen plays down his indebtedness to Adorno in this particular but the debt is considerable. It is the "temporality of fashion" that Svendsen emphasizes in his discussion of art's relationship with fashion on Adorno's account (Svendsen 2006: 109, 176n39). And he cites Adorno on newness immediately after equating the fashionable with the new (ibid.: 28, 162n24).
- 15 Svendsen (2006) credits Kant with having been the first to draw attention to "the new as an essential characteristic of fashion" (25–26). See ibid.: 28: "A fashion object does not *in principle* need any particular qualities apart from being new." All emphases in original.
- 16 Svendsen 2006: 126, 149–151; but the book builds more single-mindedly toward this conclusion than a few citations indicate.
- 17 Ashwell and Langton 2011: 144.
- Lipovetsky (1994) reiterates (1) that fashion did not exist before late medieval Europe, as the creed of the social construction of phenomena would also have it; (2) that the nature of fashion shifted dramatically several times between then and now, in accord with the doctrine of historical disjunctions; (3) that contemporary dress despite its look of corporate-mandated control actually testifies to the free choices of self-asserting individuals, in accord with faith in the subversive play of power back against its hegemonic deployments. Essentialism appears in Lipovetsky's refusal to recognize anything as fashion that does not commit itself to regular change. He calls the propensity for change "characteristic" of fashion (19), speaks of fashion's "unwavering passion for novelty" (27), of "fashion in the strict sense" (20).
- 19 Lipovetsky 1994: 15, 20, 27, 41, 64, 135, 157.
- Tarde 1962. The book originally appeared in French, in 1890. Lipovetsky 1994: 126, 227. Some versions of de Tarde's kind of explanation still appear; thus "[f]ashion ... flowed into the lower strata by means of a well-known mimetic mechanism," Perrot 1994: 179.
- 21 See Lipovetsky1994: 126: "One no longer imitates one's betters, one imitates what one sees in the vicinity." Although Lipovetsky mostly hews to the position that dress today means fragmentation not uniformity (235), he is capable of describing

- the history of fashion as a continuous tradition of mimesis. He considers it sufficient refutation of the imitation view to point to examples of non-hierarchical imitation. But this critique runs up a blind alley, for Plato, Rousseau, Santayana, and Thoreau never restrict imitation in dress to those who copy their superiors.
- Here is a significant difference between my analysis and Hanson (1998). She and I both want to understand why and how philosophy developed such hostility toward fashion. Hanson emphasizes the perceived superficiality of clothing, its perceived collusion with patriarchy (in the eyes of its feminist opponents), most profoundly the dependence of fashion on the human body (157). "Fashion achieves its aspirations in being worn, and the body collaborates with costume to produce the effects of fashionable dress." By contrast, focusing on imitativeness (as I do; or rather as I take philosophers to have done) leads to the image of fashionable dress as inherently passive. To be sure, robust philosophical traditions link what is superficial to what is bodily, the body in turn to what is passive. But this is to say that the two approaches are compatible, not that they are the same project.
- 23 Thoreau, Walden, ch. 1, par. 38.
- 24 Thoreau, Walden, ch. 1, par. 39.
- 25 Schorman 2003: 21. The phrase "sloppy dresser" may derive from these slop shops.
- 26 Thoreau, Walden, ch. 1, par. 19.
- 27 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts, pt. 1, par. 5. Translation my own.
- 28 Rousseau, Discours, pt. 1, par. 7.
- 29 Garve 2004 [1792]: 67; Smith, *Theory*, I.iii.34 (Smith 1982: 62); Kant, *Anthropology*, §71 (Kant 1978: 148).
- 30 Locke, Essay, II.xxviii.10; "law of opinion," see Kelley 1996: 118; "record of human error," ibid.: 122.
- 31 Nunn 2000: 175.
- 32 Perrot 1994: 10; see also 20.
- 33 Greenwood 2003: 95.
- 34 Greenwood 2003: 109n9.
- 35 Simmel 2004 [1901]: 291.
- 36 On Brummell see Kelly 2006.
- 37 Brummell may have been vain but he could think about vanity and spot it even in purportedly unostentatious guises. In *Male and Female Costume* he rejects the cheap contempt for fashion as itself vain: "There is quite as much vanity and coxcombry in slovenliness, as there is in its most extravagant opposite." Brummell 1972: 122.
- 38 Kelly 2006: Brummell bathing and dressing, 95–98; "he knew human nature well enough," 125.
- 39 Arnold 2009: 51.
- 40 D'Aurevilly 2004: 182.
- D'Aurevilly 2004: 178. See also Georg Simmel, writing in 1901 not about Brummell especially but about the "man of culture" who is drawn to "[w]hatever is exceptional ... or whatever departs from the customary norm": Simmel 2004: 294. Although Simmel describes a figure who broadcasts his strangeness in a manner that Brummell would not have dreamt of doing, the reflexivity one needs to be his man of culture is the same that is at work in Brummell's negotiations with John Bull's eye, and in d'Aurevilly's exquisitely pitched diagnosis of Brummellism.
- 42 Suppose someone objected that a Dandy is *not* to be looked to as an illustration of fashion consciousness, that the extremely stylish are the exceptions to a theory of fashion rather than its defining cases. This objection would be more convincing if very stylish people were not the types that most people consider true exemplars of fashion. But fashion is not one of those practices in which the extreme is marginal (as when Duchampian ready-mades lie outside the general conception of the work of art). The extreme or prodigious is rather standard and normative, as the

- extremely religious person is thought to illustrate religiosity better than one who is casually religious does.
- 43 Farennikova and Prinz 2011: 23. Perrot escapes this return to imitativeness but only by making the dandy a *deus ex machina*. "The dandy assaulted the public in order to exist, but without it he could not exist. Thus he engendered fads and mimicry in spite of himself and never followed them," Perrot 1994: 141.
- 44 Lipovetsky 1994: "advance" of democracy, 211; "the play of freedom," 32; drive to express freedom, 46 ("new desire to express individual uniqueness, a new exaltation of individuality"), 127 ("One dresses fashionably ... to express one's own individuality"); "accept or reject the latest fad," 124.
- When he is not attacking the view of fashion as imitation (on the grounds that that would be a primitive Marxist account) Lipovetsky more sagely finds a place for imitation e.g. "One must look like other people, but not exactly; one must follow trends and also signal one's own tastes" (Lipovetsky 1994: 33). Imitation becomes one star toward which fashion sails, just not the only one, for there is also an ideal of individuation or distinction from the crowd.
- 46 Greenwood 2003: 109n5.
- 47 Thoreau, Walden, ch. 1, par. 39.
- 48 Thoreau, Walden, ch. 1, par. 38; emphases in original. Hanson (1998: 159) draws attention to Thoreau's question of how one is related to fashion's authorities, though not with reference to foreignness.
- 49 See Zakim 2001.
- 50 Quoted in Zakim 2001: 1567.
- 51 Schorman 2003: 111.
- 52 Zeph 1:8.
- 53 Pl. Rep. 3.398a.

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5 Anti-fashion

Understanding fashion as they do, as an imitativeness so complete that people never dream of putting together an outfit of their own, and a passivity so pathological that a foreigner must be posited as the one with the new ideas, helps to explain the use that philosophers make of a phenomenon now known as anti-fashion.

Philosophers did not invent anti-fashion or the rhetoric that accompanies it, which is the rhetoric of disavowing ordinary fashion in favor of some better way to dress. The inherent reactivity of anti-fashion might make it always somewhat philosophical, in the sense that something philosophical is beginning to happen when anyone either challenges or defends a common practice. But that is to say that anti-fashion rhetoric inclines toward the philosophical, not that philosophers initiated such talk.

Philosophers did seize upon anti-fashion, however, as useful to philosophy's way of representing itself, very much as Nietzsche says philosophers first adopted the ascetic ideal, and the look and discipline of the ascetic priest, as efficacious for their own self-cultivation and accomplishment. The impulse toward anti-fashion existed before the philosopher arrived, as the priesthood and its asceticism had, or as front paws existed on animals before the day came that one animal thought to grasp, and made its hand out of the available front appendage.

Alternative to fashion

The world of fashion contains its rejection and putative contrary. Many worlds do. In the fashion world, that built-in rejection is an orientation toward dress that has been around for as long as fashion has, and has been known by the name "anti-fashion" for a century.

Anti-fashion is not merely the wariness about trends in dress that people feel from time to time. That might encourage anti-fashion thinking but does not suffice to constitute such thinking. Still less does the term cover such wide-spread phenomena as failing to know what fashion is, or (worse) the bathos of aiming at fashion and missing. But all those experiences are good places to start, because in their different ways they suggest an alternative, something that is not

fashion or fashionable. Call this non-fashion. These non-fashions fall short of the alternative that a philosophical opponent to fashion would want, inasmuch as they presuppose the continuing existence of fashion as the thing they fail to attain, or fail to know, or regard with suspicion.

For the same reason the other world one seeks to escape to from the fashion world cannot be the world as it was before fashion began, when the earth as a whole was still innocent of fashion. The alternative to fashion cannot be simply life long ago. Imagining such innocence works well enough for nostalgic moments, but it offers no guidance to someone who has experienced fashion and wonders how to live with it, or live around it.

The challenge is to respond to the pressures represented by fashion in dress with a true opposite, not with short skirts when the long ones are in, not (generally speaking) with the negation of one detail among others, but somehow with an alternative to anything fashionable. No specific item of clothing, but the social and human causes and effects of fashion, are to be regretted. And if the problem lies in what fashion shows about the members of a society, the solution will not consist in changing what those people wear, even if they end up dressing differently. But on a larger scale their relation to what they wear needs to change; and who knows how to imagine that? The worry about human imitativeness as a loss of autonomy – an individual loss that gets projected into politics as the loss of national or ethnic autonomy (hence the influential foreigner) - calls for a remedy that will include, but must go beyond, a change in what people wear.

The remedy in question will not engage in a fight, as anti-communism did against communism, nor ward something off as antidotes and antimacassars do. If anti-fashion is done rightly, fashion is forgotten.

The affiliation between anti-fashion and philosophy derives from the justification that people give for the look and cut of what they wear. Anti-fashion's wearers rest on an authority other than the social contract, the pact of mass mutual imitation, that philosophers identify as the force behind fashion. Whatever else can be said more precisely about anti-fashion, it begins by appealing to some reason to be given for the clothing you wear, other than the social fact that other people are wearing the same thing. The social contract does not ground anti-fashion, as (in the moral realm) many philosophers seek the justification for moral principles in one alternative to the social contract or another.

Does anti-fashion described in such terms even exist? These are a lot of constraints to place on a single practice. "It might even be impossible," Daniel Yim writes, "since in proclaiming oneself to be anti-fashion for moral or political reasons one is forced by necessity to select an alternative"; and presumably the alternative begins by presupposing the fashion facts it wanted to be independent of. Worse than materially impossible, other philosophers say "The idea of something that is in fashion forever verges on incoherence, because the 'in' implies a contrast; something must come in, and then go out."3

Nevertheless some impossible things keep being attempted, and anti-fashion is one of them. To understand the movements toward such independence from fashion it will be enough if we can make sense of the attempts, regardless of their chances at succeeding.

The tradition of anti-fashion

Anne Hollander is one authority on dress who includes anti-fashion in her history of fashion, even joining their births together. She begins the story of both around 1300, "roughly with the rise of towns and the middle class." The newly enriched bourgeoisie of that urban class signaled its financial status by wearing ornate clothes, hence fashion. Some members of the aristocracy could no longer outspend these commoners, so they pretended not to care about *those* so-called badges of status. The same old thing would do, however baggy or faded;⁴ whence anti-fashion.

Another early fingerprint of early anti-fashion, also from an aristocrat, appears a century after Hollander's first examples, though not resentfully or (as far as we can tell) in opposition to fashion. The Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good (1396–1467), was known for his sartorial abstemiousness rather than for haughtiness toward the nouveaux riches. Meaning to be morally serious, Philip took disregard for fashion so far as to dress in black all the forty-eight years of his reign – publicly, privately, in every portrait he sat for. Duke or not he would not dress in the styles of the court even though he easily could have.

Hollander does not mention Philip the Good but her description of anti-fashion fits him. She considers black clothing "one steady current in the course of fashion that always gains power ... from its ancient flavor of antifashion." Wearing black not only showed that Philip continued to mourn his father but also let him surprise the institution of dress and remain outside the game of fashion.

A generation or two later, Baldesar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528) endorsed the wearing of black among nobles as a standard or baseline color. Advising courtiers about every aspect of their behavior, the book arrives at the subject of what to wear. Then the Magnifico Giuliano describes the national dresses of different countries⁷ and judges among them. In the matter of fit he finds French clothing too loose while German clothing fits too tightly. The Italian cut between those extremes is just right. On the same principle, inclining away from extremes, Giuliano calls somber colors better than gaudy ones. Those colors are less emphatic, and black the best of all.⁸ Black refrains from participating in any nationality's fads. Whoever the foreigners prove to be, black will not be the color of the fabric they bring.

Black avoids color mistakes, presumably by virtue of being an alternative to color. In 2014 the *New York Times* will still be advising its readers, "If you are invited to lunch with someone who works in the fashion industry, do not wear your most 'fashionable' outfit. Wear black." Black was already a default for Castiglione, functioning not as a fashion but as a second-order other-than-fashion; and this chapter will come back to look at black at greater length.

Castiglione's argument has aged so well that it can turn up again in a twenty-first-century newspaper article about handbags. Bags now come in more styles

and colors than ever, according to Becky Aikman in *Long Island Newsday*; but "some customers at the Coach store said they'd stay with black to avoid the need to switch their stuff from bag to bag every time they changed their outfit." Black suspends fashion choices by standing outside colors as such.

Because the nobles' baggy clothes and Philip's black costume originated in no institutional or theoretical complaint about fashion, it is more accurate to call them harbingers of anti-fashion than the fully conscious phenomenon. Then too fashion before 1850 was not what it would become later, when manufacturing, distribution, and advertising combined – midway through the nineteenth century, in Paris (around the time that Thoreau was writing) – to produce the modern fashion industry. Also around 1850, this alleged beginning of fashion in its full sense, the reaction against fashion also found its voice and became self-conscious.

On one reading of modern anti-fashion, it dovetailed with the avant-garde in modern art. William Morris, who founded the Arts and Crafts movement, may have designed the loose-draping dress (audaciously made to be worn without a corset) that his wife wore. Henry van de Velde, a Belgian architect and designer, followed Morris by designing not only the house he lived in and every item in it but also everything his own wife wore. As Morris's wife Jane did, van de Velde's wore simple, loose-fitting garments, hanging from the shoulders rather than belting and buckling close around the body. She invited Toulouse-Lautrec to the house one day in 1895, and upon arriving he took offense, thinking she was welcoming him dressed in her housecoat. 12

The artists and artists' associates who may be grouped together loosely as the Aesthetic movement found what the fashion industry was offering ugly and irrational, not to mention foreign. Amelia Bloomer, whose name would later attach to women's short pants, campaigned for shorter dresses that freed up women's bodies. Bloomer represents both the "naturalism" found in anti-fashion and the feminist protest that motivated some of its manifestations. The shorter cut of trousers was better for women, and no obstacle stood in the way of wearing them "except the fact that the fashion has not yet come to us from the corrupt Persian court." [To] fight fashion," Radu Stern writes in connection with this movement, "was also ... to fight the influence of Paris."

More generally fashion was taken to represent a threat to autonomy. Someone else had made decisions about what people wore that they could have made for themselves. In an essay he wrote in 1900, Henry van de Velde called fashion "despotism." Art in its vocation as the maker of beauty could undo this despotism.

But why should beautiful clothes be a strike against fashion? Is it because beauty has an eternal quality while fashion changes? Will change or change-lessness be the telling distinction again? Anti-fashion's advocates would need to marshal an elaborate metaphysics of beauty, and then account for why human beings could perceive that eternal beauty (those same human beings who had been so corrupted by the fashion industry as to lose their taste, now hanging on the industry's pronouncements), all in order to promise that artistic designs for

clothing could solve the problem of fashion with a kind of dress really deserving the name anti-fashion.

As a thesis about creative dress*making* the Aesthetics' opposition to fashion is more plausible. Thanks to the individuality of artistic production, clothes that people make when they dream up their own designs will not look like what someone tells them to make. Even without unrealistic expectations about artists' originality, such a claim means something. But this image of what clothes can become only applies to how they are designed and manufactured, not addressing what is widely called the problem about fashion, that *consumers*' tastes have lost their originality and autonomy. All the fresh designs in the world will not change the look of modern dress if those designs do not find a willing and aesthetically able audience.

Maybe the hope for artistic dress turns on a view of aesthetic judgment, the belief that once consumers began assessing clothing designs in the same way they assessed works of art, they would apply different standards from the ones they had been using. "Is it beautiful (or elegant, or useful)?" would replace "Is it popular (new, expensive)?" Not an impossible suggestion even if it is still optimistic. If the problem with fashion is that people *only* ask themselves "Is this what everyone else is wearing?" and "Can I go out in public without shame in these clothes?" then autonomous judgment never has a chance to begin. Looking at clothes as art may well lead you back to the same tastes you absorbed from your fellow citizens. But by not being a question *about* those other people, the question "Does this look beautiful?" holds open the promise of freedom in consumers' judgments.

The Aesthetic movement does not seem to have justified its art clothing along such lines in any explicit argument. More typically it grounded its replacements for fashion either in "the Aesthetic movement's attempt to introduce beauty into every aspect of life," or in what Ken Montague's assessment of Aesthetic dress calls its pervasive appeals to *nature*. "The natural," unexamined by the reformers themselves and still left unexamined in later descriptions of their work, was assumed to unite the bodily health of the people who wore these new designs with the beauty of those same designs. The clothes were healthy for their wearers because natural, and beautiful because natural, therefore healthy and beautiful.

Natural clothing sounds like a contradiction even before you look at an example. If it is dress put over the body it already fails to return your body to a state of nature. Calling a few clothing designs natural by comparison with the rest resembles other cultural comparisons one does not try any more, like calling one alphabet natural as opposed to all the others, or one side of the road that people drive on as opposed to the other. And if you say in defense of natural dress that all human beings use some form of dress, so that dress may be considered as natural to human life as language is, then again there is no sense in distinguishing among types of dress as natural versus unnatural. If it is or it has become natural for all people to wear something rather than nothing – minimally, if people as they now exist all experience the demand to wear clothing as

automatic and non-negotiable, in that respect second nature, hence natural then that fact welcomes all human clothing into the category of the natural, rather than permitting a differentiation between natural and unnatural clothes. Either no clothes are natural or they all are.

But dismissing every idea that sounds contradictory is not the path to wisdom, even if it is a path that philosophy sometimes chooses. For one thing the wish for natural clothing can take forms that do not require calling some clothes naturally right and the rest abominations. The rise of artificial fabrics since the middle of the twentieth century has made it meaningful to prefer natural fibers in clothing. And one does not need to be a relativist about "natural fit" or "natural movement." There may indeed be no dress that permits all the movements available to the body. Most clothes get in the way of sexual activity and bathing. But a jumpsuit really does differ from a whalebone corset and petticoats.

Maybe the problem is not that "the natural" must be meaningless when applied to clothing, for it is not, but that the term has not yet been made precise enough to be meaningful. Anti-fashion clothing seeks to obey the body's natural movements or to follow the body's natural shape in order to have some principle it follows that is not what everyone else is doing because they are doing it. And yet something contradictory remains in the role of antifashion. In fact this is the contradiction that anti-fashion lives. It wants to occupy the place that fashion now occupies by being a recognized way of dress - it seeks to threaten fashion's place as one competitor threatens an equal – at the same time that it refuses to acknowledge the existence of the competition between them. Anti-fashion wants to win the game and to stop playing it. More than that, it wants to win the game by not playing, as if having a picnic on the pitcher's mound not only rendered the baseball game impossible but made you World Series champions.

The double desire in anti-fashion does not render it fraudulent. The dismissal of this idea that tries to cast it as a lie really moves too quickly. Svendsen says regarding resistance to fashion in general: "To try to oppose fashion, for example by using one type of apparel (perhaps a black suit and black shirt) exclusively for every occasion, is also just a question of playing a role."21 "Playing a role" sounds like "lying"; it is such an old metaphor for lying that "hypocrite" etymologically means "actor." And some deep version of the wish for authenticity may indeed remain unfulfilled no matter what one chooses to wear. But Svendsen is wrapping his moral rejection of fashion inside a condemnation of human society as such. From this perspective anti-fashion is almost certain to be condemned; unfortunately, so is everything else that humans do.

(And if one wears nothing at all? Nudity has not come into the discussion of anti-fashion yet but it will return, as will Svendsen's examples of suits and black clothing.)

Lipovetsky means something narrower by "anti-fashion" when he addresses the concept. For him it describes an even later phenomenon, something proper to life since the mid-twentieth century: "the historically unprecedented phenomenon of youthful, marginal styles based on criteria unknown to professional fashion. After the Second World War, the first minority youth fashions appeared ...; these early 'antifashions' took on new scope and meaning in the 1960s." Because of a culture of adolescence that had not previously existed, new clothes appeared that derived their justification from sources other than the fashion industry.

But Lipovetsky does not like to use the term "anti-fashion" for the result. "[N]orms openly hostile to those of the official canon have found social expression; however, far from destroying the principle of fashion, they have simply made its overall architecture more complex and more diverse." Anti-fashion is still a form of fashion rather than an alternative or showing the way to alternatives – "far from" that. And other historians of fashion come to a similar verdict. 24

Considering the contradictory goals that anti-fashion sets for itself, it is not hard to find the concept or the name inadequate. The discussion will go further if, rather than arguing over terminology, we read theories of anti-fashion in the context of those philosophical attacks on fashion that the previous chapter surveyed and that this chapter will return to.

But before coming to more philosophy it might be better to think about more examples of clothing, not as it is interpreted in theories but as worn on bodies. Some things make good sense in practice even if they can't seem to work in theory; maybe anti-fashion belongs in that category. For there is no question that, during the last century or two (in some cases longer), ways of dress have appeared that do not follow the vagaries of fashion. In theory anti-fashion might be impossible, for reasons like the ones that Svendsen gives. In life, however, certain options have seemed to escape the fashion cycle, and have been discussed in those terms.

Anti-fashion today

It would be hard to improve on the description of anti-fashion that Anya Farennikova and Jesse Prinz give, although they speak of "a basic piece": "It refers to the items that constitute the fundamentals of style," and as fundamentals something distinct from embroideries that change from season to season. The actual examples cited most often include uniforms, men's suits, blue jeans, and black clothing, some of which work better as anti-fashions than others do.

Uniforms might promise to counteract fashion directly. As Paul Fussell writes, "obviously fashions change rapidly (the whole point), while uniforms are more fixed, stable, and continuous." In a way uniforms in the broadest sense of the word may even stand as the paradigmatic anti-fashion, inasmuch as their stability – and stability of meaning: a uniform bears its meaning with a clarity and unambiguity that civilian clothes rarely achieve – offers the greatest liberation from fashion's polyvalence of decentered origin.

Indeed one way of examining philosophers' wishes for an anti-fashion will be through the paradigm of the uniform. The later part of this book will be asking: Can there be a philosophical uniform?

Besides remaining the same from one time to another, the traditional uniform effaces the social differences that fashion marks and heightens. This is another feature of anti-fashions, to hide class. Lipovetsky's thumbnail description of anti-fashion as "youthful, marginal styles" captures this significance of the phenomenon, whatever he may think of the term used for identifying it. When socially marginalized ways of dressing take on the cachet that youth can give them, those badges of poverty or excludedness become standard dress.

Finally, although women wear them as easily as men do, uniforms have tended to connote a man's outfit. That is often the way with anti-fashions. Henry van de Velde's project of designing clothes for his wife to wear, not for himself, illustrates something about this trait of anti-fashion. He appears to have considered the existing styles for men already more rational than what the fashion system produced for women; "we men have less patience" and would not sit still for inventive new styles.²⁷ What men already wear has evaded some of the pressures toward fashion.

The attractive looseness of the term "uniform" however makes it less useful for understanding anti-fashion. "Uniform" can become a metaphor for anything worn commonly or characteristically; depending on the case, that characteristic dress can be fixed or flighty. When a businessman's uniform is the gray suit, "uniform" simply means the same thing as "anti-fashion" instead of elucidating that term. But the metaphor can also identify what is flighty, as when you call an outfit "this year's uniform." Young city men all buy the same brand of down jacket. Then the word "uniform" tells you that people are dressing alike, and essentially means the same thing as "fashion."

Suppose we drop the metaphorical uniform and use the word literally. But the military uniform no longer functions as it did when Herodotus reported the Persian Empire's muster, nor as it did for thousands of years after Herodotus.²⁸ The change came with the rise of military camouflage – not the occasional camouflaging that may have always existed for spies and guerrillas, but camouflage conceived as what every soldier wears at all times, camouflage as norm. "Back in the eighteenth century soldiers needed to be seen in all their threatening glory to demoralize their enemy a short distance away. Now they needed to be unseen." Uniforms are no longer about uniformity, continuity, and quick recognition. Now that they are made not to be seen, they serve much less well as models for what to be seen in.

The problem of camouflage may be complicating a straightforward point. Literal uniforms belong in the army and on public officials. Being official dress they are not available for civilians who want to free themselves from fashion's dictates. So "uniform" in the exact sense will not elucidate anti-fashion: the word will have to be taken metaphorically. But then one has to say what a metaphorical uniform is, i.e. a standard and universally significant form of clothing that does not change with prevailing trends — in other words an

anti-fashion. The concept of the uniform does not constitute progress beyond a first primitive idea of anti-fashion if it leaves one with a metaphorical uniform as obscure as anti-fashion had been.

The suit

The man's suit of the last few centuries is Anne Hollander's example, and the subject of another of her books of fashion history, *Sex and Suits*. ³⁰ The suit's increasing exclusivity might seem to tell against its use as class-effacing antifashion. The slang word "suit" to mean a businessman or government official (though now old hat) may suggest the anonymity of men in power, but it does acknowledge the distinguishing power that comes with the suit.

Still, if this is power it is a power diffuse enough to be perceived (by the suits themselves) as compatible with a form of equality. As I already noted, the tuxedo, to cite an extreme version of a suit, puts every man on equal footing for black-tie affairs. The differences in status that the suit continues to signify do not neutralize its erasure of differences: "the Neo-classical costume was a leveler in its time" (Hollander again), "and has since remained one."³¹

Men's suits have also remained unresponsive to capricious change for the century or more that they have symbolized standard dress, perhaps because they have been distinguished from fashion. In 1887 the American critic Henry Finck contrasted the bulky male "sack suit" with "fashionable dress"; and in the following decade Edward Bok, the editor of *Ladies' Home Journal*, cautioned men against taking too much interest in etiquette books and "fashion." Whatever the reason, the suit changed slowly. Somewhat late in the twentieth century the three buttons on the jacket attritted to two and the trouser cuff disappeared (though it is bound to return). Lapels widened and narrowed, but not much in either direction. These are incidental changes in a costume that covers most of the adult body.³²

In part the suit may say "standard dress" because of its religious associations. Nothing like a priest's robes, nevertheless it does suggest the outfit of a Protestant minister. Religious associations remove dress from the pressures of fashion when a religion gives you a good reason for wearing what you might otherwise worry is not done, or is not being done any longer.

Or the reason could be, as it is with uniforms, that the suit means masculinity with a clarity and permanence of significance not usually found in modern clothes. To say this is to leave the question unanswered, why suits are men's suits. Trousers used to be so male that "wearing the pants" meant being a man, and not only meant that but meant it in a pretty obvious way (because wearing trousers could not be about anything else). Then it seemed to take no time at all for women to change into trousers.³⁴ The suit however has not crossed over – and not from anyone's failure to try crossing it. Businesswomen wear skirted suits, although those can't be the same thing in the first place because they have skirts, and in the second place because those outfits have remained specific to business and government. A lot of male college professors, police

detectives, car salesmen, chauffeurs, and psychoanalysts wear suits, although women in the same lines of work do not put on skirt and matching jacket.

The pantsuit made a bid for female equivalence to a man's suit. Amazing how fast it became a joke, not just no longer fresh but a howling blunder, all in the course of the 1970s. Was the pantsuit really so unwearable? But it was perfectly comfortable, and like its masculine counterpart it solved the problem of coordinating the elements of an outfit. The jacket went with the trousers. Wear a shirt that went with both of them and you were finished dressing.

It may be that the instant matching of the outfit's parts explains why it fell out of favor. Many men welcome the thought that once they have chosen a jacket they already have the trousers to go with it. Women might not have wanted to free themselves from assembling their day's outfit, or may not have considered that a liberation. People laugh at Garanimals today too, but in its time it was a popular brand of children's clothes that helped small kids dress themselves.

Even denim now comes up against the matching-tops-and-bottoms taboo. A few decades ago it was unremarkable to wear blue jeans and a blue denim jacket over a shirt. Now the rule, widely repeated, says "No double denim." Is it that these possibilities, and the risible men's leisure suit, encroach on the domain of the suit? (Funny that the slang for double denim is "the Texas tuxedo.") Or is the monochromatic look so inherently undesirable that only an unusual mode of dress, like the men's suit, could overcome that obstacle?

Perhaps the answer comes back to masculinity again. The single-colored costume might seem too monotonous for women, who are supposed to be decorated, or for children, who are supposed to be playful, or for unimportant men at leisure, who are supposed to relax. Only the man with work to do needs to demonstrate his seriousness by abstaining from motley.

Color plays a special part in anti-fashion – certain colors anyway – but looking into that part will have to wait. For now the standardness of the suit has led back to its association with men. For that matter, the "feminist protest" behind much anti-fashion surely originates in the great difference between the anti-fashions traditionally available to the two genders. Men had a "fashion-exempted" way of dressing, and "relative freedom from fashion's dictates."

The dandy comes back into the story because of his historical attachment to the suit, which seems to have let Beau Brummell follow his own rule about not standing out in the street. The dandy ethos abhorred frill and fuss, and other causes of becoming a spectacle; and the dandies accordingly popularized the simple suit, or a proto-suit still a step away from the matching trousers and jacket and the jacket's horizontal line all around (no tails).

No question that English clothing was ready for a standard outfit. For all his posturing, Brummell adhered to the principle of uniformity. But given his attention to unnoticed just-so dressing, what is it about the suit that would have attracted Brummell?

Brummell's biographer Ian Kelly insists on the classicism that informed his taste. Kelly chronicles Brummell's long preparations every morning, often in

front of admiring friends, and the process crucially included bathing, one of Brummell's precepts being a preference for smelling clean over smothering one's bad smell with perfumes. "Bathing was the foundation of Brummell's Spartan aesthetic; his dandiacal body was to face the world ... as natural as the classical statues his style would emulate." Brummell's book *Greek and Roman Styles* did not propose transporting ancient draped styles of clothing to his own century, but his admiration for dress in antiquity did rest on the natural quality that he found in its cuts and arrangements of cloth and that he advocated within his own time's vocabulary of dress.

Hollander's own story of the suit accounts for the interest that a gentleman would have had in the early suit, in terms of the way its lines denoted an idealized male body. As Kelly said about Brummell in an interview: "A good tailor exaggerates the more desirable parts of the anatomy – padding the chest and shoulders, for example – while disguising such things as pot bellies." This is close to Hollander's view that the suit was designed and continues to the present as a depiction of the masculine physique into which one fitted or forced the actual male body; or for that matter close to the view promoted by the menswear industry itself, late in the nineteenth century, when it popularized the sack suit that reinforced a bulked-up and chesty body image for American men. ³⁸

Partly the shoulder pads that Kelly mentions are what make the suit a caricature of the masculine form that men wear outside their other clothes; partly and in a technically more complex way it is the suit jacket's lapels that accomplish this effect. Hollander tells how long it took for England's tailors to master the cutting and then the shaping of cloth that made the lapels lie flat on a jacket's front – unless *pace* Hollander it was the French³⁹ – where, in any case, in a cartoon version of the V-shaped build the lapels started out abdomen-level with nothing, meeting at a button (over the belly button) in a waspier waist than any corseted woman's, then widening and parting as they rose into a broad lapel-chest between and a little below what now looked like two strong shoulders.

Brummell's reason for promoting what would soon turn into *the suit* did not reduce to historical contingency if Hollander is right. And she does make a persuasive case. Brummell, and not he alone but a generation or two of well-dressed men, could see the modern suit (as they could *not* see high frilled collars) as modernity's rediscovery of what ancient clothes made of folded rectangles had always known. The modern manufacture that combined cutting, sewing, starching, and padding had hidden the body inside its costume. Now modern dress had found its way back to clothing that, while not revealing the body, nevertheless could be described as being *about* the body, or at least about the naked male body.

Anti-fashions may change very slowly, as ancient styles did, and certainly not with the automatic turnovers known to modern fashion. It does not contradict their status to say that even they change sometimes. They do not have to be eternal to endure beyond the reach of fashion, and to stand as alternatives to fashion. They might even end up ceasing to be anti-fashions, and maybe that will happen to men's suits, especially in the present culture that idealizes

informal dress and behavior. "Casual Fridays" have become standard at more than a few serious firms on Wall Street. An elevator ride in a large New York financial building, at lunchtime on a Friday, will show you dozens of men showily relaxed in striped polo shirts and cotton khakis. The practice does not need to spread to other days of the week to have its effect. Casual Fridays already constitute the great effect, that everyone acknowledges the burdensome character of the suit. What men in modern corporations once assumed they would wear every day until they died now feels like a special undertaking, something to be put on barely more than half the days of the week. Maybe this change shows the suit's ceasing to be an anti-fashion. More likely it is still too early to tell. The change in fortune that befell the man's hat during John F. Kennedy's presidency is not likely to happen as precipitously with men's suits.

Denim jeans

Blue jeans share some features with their putative opposite the suit, even if jeans now appear to have lost the opportunity they once had of becoming true anti-fashions. Until jeans belonged to the fashion world they enjoyed a period in which they were not merely popular but popular for being standard dress, and masculine despite their availability to women.

The fashion world took over jeans in the early 1970s with advertising campaigns by (among others) Landlubber Jeans, then Calvin Klein, and by the 1980s a spectrum of expensive jeans boasting special features. What had once seemed like a contradiction in terms appeared: blue jeans from France. Evidently jeans could stand outside fashion only for as long as they were American. (Even the names of European cities that we still hear connected with this clothing – the "jean" deriving from Genoa, "denim" colored the *bleu de Nîmes* – have ceased being foreign words. It is not the European cities' names we hear but their Americanizations.)

But a generation before the fashionable jeans, around the time of World War II, youth culture began to claim for itself what had been rural work clothes. Even urban and rich kids did. "For the first time [denim] could be seen as a fashion" in the 1940s. "More accurately, young people wearing dungarees were making an *anti*fashion statement, as they imagined a kinship with the country's dispossessed."⁴⁰ James Sullivan's book on jeans begins with this act of solidarity with the marginalized and pictures the result as a quest for equality. The book is a paean to jeans in the first place and yet the talk of equality makes it sound like a baptismal text worthy of Galatians. "Blue jeans are for men and women alike, for all body types. They imply either democratic parity or the aristocratic hierarchies of status … blue jeans have obliterated every demographic distinction … in becoming the common casual uniform."⁴¹

Until demographic distinctions returned with designer jeans at startling high prices, or in such styles as the baggy pair that draped off a single hip, jeans were functioning somewhat as the business suit of the young and casual. There is no denying the differences between the two forms of dress. The suit may have

borrowed its *gravitas* from the Protestant minister's dress – it certainly became the clothing for a man to wear to church – but jeans never hint at religious overtones past or present. The suit is masculine at heart and female equivalents fail preposterously; jeans may have begun as working clothes for men but they became common and unremarkable among women.

In an article about expensive jeans, *Long Island Newsday* reports one typical assessment of jeans: the persisting meaning they have despite recent extravagances. "They have always been a statement, since Elvis Presley and James Dean. They're identified with youth and having a great body"; ⁴² and that great body suggests a comparison between suits and jeans. In their own way, and eschewing the drawn-on look of the male physique, jeans purport to show what they are concealing. Jeans do this famously by aging so that they shape to fit the legs and hips. It helps for the jeans to be tight: "the malleable clay of blue jeans brought out the differences in human bodies." ⁴³

Marlon Brando advertised the body-manifesting power of jeans in A Streetcar Named Desire. Lucinda Ballard was the costume designer for both the stage and film versions that he appeared in. Inspired (as she said) by ditchdiggers whose clothes clung to their bodies so that they looked like "statues," Ballard washed Bando's jeans until they were tight on his skin. She cut out the pants' inner pockets. Brando approved. "I think that Stanley would have liked to push his hands in his pockets and feel himself."

Because denim has the strength to be worn very tightly for long periods, the revelatory power of jeans is universally known. Farmer Jeans recommended dry-aging jeans; one wash and "the character of your body will show up."⁴⁵ This is the reason for prudish and amused responses, sometimes both at once. "Because of the tight-fitting crotch and rear, jeans became an indispensable part of a young man's dating and seduction equipment." Landlubber Jeans ran advertising campaigns in the early 1970s that played off this revelatory effect with nearly naked models and the slogan "Nothing is better than Landlubber clothes."⁴⁶

Can the anti-fashion universality of jeans, when they have had that universal status, derive from their reference to the body within? Men's suits were never accused of showing too much, but if they too through a different strategy refer to the physique, then maybe they are suggesting as jeans do that the clothes are not there. Aside from the lines along which the suit jacket is cut, the turned-back lapels also hint that the suit's wearer is in the process of taking his jacket off. It lies on his chest half-open — shirt and tie are underneath, of course, and there's no danger of actual disrobing, but symbolically the message delivered is the nearness and the imminent arrival of the man's body.

Is the result to be called a *fantasy* of nakedness or something more specific? In Peirce's terminology, jeans might be icons of the body while the suit is an index; or you can say that the suit is allegorical where jeans are pictorial. Either way the anti-fashion, like Heraclitus's king at Delphi, neither *legei* "speaks" of and declares the body nor *kruptei* "hides" it but *sêmainei* means the body or indicates or gives a sign of it; intimates; *signals* the human body.⁴⁷

In the case of jeans the result is "the idea that wearing jeans was not dressing at all." And although for a growing number of American men today it is impossible to imagine having such thoughts about suits, the fact is that suits thrived as they did and for as long as they did because as a decision about what to wear that day they could become the default or null choice.

Writing on another occasion, about Jean-Paul Gaultier's "physique sweater" of 1991 that displayed idealized chest and abdomen as a kind of breastplate, Richard Martin tries to generalize the body-signifying property of jeans to everything men wear. "In order to be erotic, menswear has to be imprinted by the man within. We know this phenomenon best perhaps from jeans, the denim trousers that attain incremental value as they take on the shape of the man within." Martin narrows his point in one respect, generalizes in another: "It is not happenstance that this is a trait of the male wardrobe initially rather than the female."

But too many male clothes conceal and deny the physique for the generalization about "male wardrobe" to be informative. Hats enlarge the head, and if an oversized head suggests any physique it is the infant's, not the eroticized man's. Neckties, which for many men are the one spot permitted for displaying patterns and colors they would never wear otherwise – colors as light as yellow, patterns dainty as paisley – are also strikingly the one part of a moderately dressed man's outfit that hangs from the body rather than clinching it: the only male garb that *drapes*. And by hanging flat as it does the necktie occludes the chest's shape. Not coincidentally this is the one male adornment that has no function. No matter how long it's been since it stopped being worn to protect the shirt from food spills, and no matter how often someone calls it phallic, the tie is a reminder of women's clothing that, if it eroticizes a man, does so by displaying his feminine characteristics. ⁵⁰

Neckties are also significantly the element of standard male dress most vulnerable to fashion. *That* men wear ties may not be negotiable when they wear suits, but what the ties look like changes with nearly the speed and unpredictability of any fashion item.

If evocations of the body are not common to male wardrobe as such, but are a shared trait of some kinds of anti-fashion, then by this circumambagious path anti-fashion has again found a justification in some appeal to the natural. The natural classically sculpted male physique, no matter how rarely it is found in a state of nature — no matter how rarely *men* are found in a state of nature — nevertheless haunts certain costumes and not others. When for a length of time and to some degree clothing does liberate itself from fashion's dictates, a plausible appeal to nature has been one strategy by which it escaped the social contract of fashion, mobbing imitativeness at home egged on by new styles slyly introduced from the clever foreigners abroad.

Body art

Talk of the uniformed man brings shaved heads and tattoos to mind as antifashions, even though these do not involve materials placed on or over the body.

Tattoos make the longevity of anti-fashion literal and concrete, a longevity of the token not only of the type. Certain patterns and bodily locations are more popular in one year than others, but hardly anyone changes tattoos by the season as they do with clothes. This is not playing with the idea of an anti-fashion's longevity, or making it a metaphor. When an item of dress or adornment lasts a long time, it is implied to be acceptable dress for that long a time. Otherwise its durability would have no value. A pair of jeans can last for years even worn every day, and it is assumed that one can (socially speaking) wear the jeans that whole time. Tattoos make the point all the more strongly.

A head shaved clean does not suggest permanence in the same way, but it does live the contradiction of anti-fashion, being one way among others to wear your hair but also a refusal to wear the hair at all. As both a haircut and the rejection of haircuts, the shaved head proposes an alternative to hairdressing fashions comparable to the alternative that suits and jeans offer. It is also nearly always male, and in one respect unchanging, in that there is only one way to wear a shaved head. We may have more men shaving their heads now than did thirty years ago, but what is on their heads is indistinguishable from what was on the previous generation's.

The shaved head still carries some religious meanings, perhaps part of its appeal. The Egyptian priests of Osiris evidently shaved their heads, as many Buddhists do today. When the biblical Joseph is first released from his imprisonment, he shaves before seeing the Pharaoh, probably all the hair off his body. In the Hebrew Bible the head specifically may be shaved to mark the completion of a vow; but a passage in Jeremiah seems to imply that while gentiles shaved their heads in mourning the Jews were forbidden to do so.⁵¹

Tattoos in the West no longer appear on only men's bodies. As other antifashions have also done, they lost their original association with masculinity. But here too a sense of magic and ritual lingers, dating back to Egypt and especially to the mixture of Egyptian and Greek practices found in Hellenistic Egypt. Some artifacts portray what look like tattoos on the figures' arms and legs; Egyptian women used certain tattoos to enhance their fertility or improve their sex lives. And there has been much discussion of a passage from the Babylonian Talmud that seems to call Jesus a magician, saying he returned from Egypt with charms scratched into his skin, i.e. tattooed on him.⁵²

Black

Classifying clothes on the basis of their colors seems too broad-stroke to explain a phenomenon as delicately balanced as anti-fashion is. But black clothing, already touched upon, belongs in the family of anti-fashions more securely than any other example this chapter has looked at.

The color black is often found in a man's suit, for one thing, inasmuch as the modern suit was identified for a long time with the black suit – as the modern automobile, the Model T, was a priori a black car. Early in the nineteenth century black edged out blue as the color of men's evening wear, and by that

time evening wear meant one or another version of the suit. By 1870 men's clothes tended to range from gray to black. Even the conscious effort in the 1930s to colorize evening wear in navy blue or midnight blue did not succeed.⁵³

The special kind of men's suit that is called "tuxedo" in the US has particularly stood outside of fashion with the longevity that is anti-fashion's overriding characteristic. John Harvey, in one of the widest-ranging books about black clothing, *Men in Black*, takes the tuxedo to merit special discussion.⁵⁴ Is this because the tuxedo is black or because it is a suit? The suit's privileged status has been noted; but black-colored clothes of many other varieties enjoy the same privilege.

In Harvey's own words, black "tends to play a double game with time." Fashions change and move. "Black fashions, however, have tended to endure: to be anti-fashion fashions with the power to persist." Anne Hollander already used the same language, calling the wearing of black "one steady current in the course of fashion that always gains power ... from its ancient flavor of anti-fashion," and giving black dress her extended attention in a book whose canvas contains the entire history of Western fashion. Black clothing, as Hollander would have it, presents itself as liberation, a token of "individual free will." Castiglione's argument for black clothes moderately cut has been noted. In its way that was a call for individual liberation as well, certainly liberation from the trends that prevailed in specific countries.

Baudelaire's Salon of 1846 review connects black dress with the democratic spirit that other anti-fashions also represent; here again, the black color is hard to separate from the cut of the suit. "On the Heroism of Modern Life," which is the final part of the 1846 review, associates the black tailcoat and frock coat with the "expression of universal equality." But even enemies of democracy, England's fascist Blackshirts, almost a hundred years later, found human equality in black clothes quite different from the suit. The Blackshirt, the periodical of Oswald Mosley's "Order," presented its recommendations on good fascist dress with emphasis on the eponymous black shirt — or, as the article spelled those words, the Blackshirt. "It brings down one of the great barriers of class by removing differences of dress." 57

Again the tuxedo deserves a special look, representing a peerage so egalitarian that a man at a black-tie event will (unless unlucky) find himself dressed indistinguishably from every other man. In fact, if waiters are serving dinner at this event, they are apt to be wearing tuxedoes too. And imagine there is entertainment: a magician. He will wear the uniform of today's professional magicians, the tuxedo. Of course magicians of another time, those medieval characters who boiled mandrake roots, used to wear black robes. A magician in Roman Egypt stripped naked for some of his spells. The tuxedo is a more professional costume, but all those outfits represent masculine equality.⁵⁸

To say that black clothing succeeds as an anti-fashion by promoting equality only pushes the question back. What is so egalitarian about black clothing? When Nestor Roqueplan, writing in 1869, fantasized the disappearance of the black suit, it was the garment's sameness that he mocked. "Livery of Wealth

and Poverty alike, of baptisms and weddings ... good for everything, same for everyone."⁵⁹ It would seem that any color would invite the same mockery if people wore it from birth to death in every social circumstance.

We may point to the religious connotations that black clothes have long had, especially connected with funerals and mourning. Greek tragedy is replete with such connotations. Aeschylus and Eurpides make much use of the adjective *melagchimos*, a poetic form of *melas* "black," to describe clothes for mourning, a ram's fleece offered at a grave, or the grave itself. In *Alcestis* Heracles speaks bluntly of going to chase "black-clad Death." The color is sober and serious, the color of the earth in which the dead were buried.⁶⁰

More broadly black dress communicates religious somberness. Monks in medieval Western Europe mostly wore black robes, while priests wore a prescribed black outfit, *tenue de ville* ("clerics"), when not in their vestments. "Browns, grays, and such are strictly forbidden." In mid-nineteenth century Gustave Claudin could complain about the trend toward black clothing by lamenting "a severe costume that makes us look like seminarians or penitents." A clerical sobriety still attaches to secularized officials in black like lawyers and judges, to knights traveling incognito, even to black-wearing devils. 62

And yet even such examples feel inadequate to their purpose. Any color may be identified with the sartorial uses it has been put to, and if black merely called funerals and judges' robes to mind, that fact would leave a skeptic suspecting that just another fashion was at work — one convention among others. Something additional appears to have happened with the color black antecedent to its special role in, or on, anti-fashion clothes. The shade was useful to a general antipathy toward color that David Batchelor calls "chromophobia." Black went fully to work as anti-fashion when both clerics and all other serious people wore the color as proof of their denial of luxury in dress — really, to state this point so that it has a point, they wore black so as not to wear any color in their clothes.

Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* contains a section that praises the blackness in abstract art, "the antithesis of the fraudulent sensuality of culture's façade," antithetical because somehow having opted out of coloration. Likewise Philip the Good showed his moral resolve not merely by confining himself to a single hue – though you might think that was abstemious enough – but by choosing to wear no hue at all.

Today's reader might have trouble recognizing the peculiarity of this condition — a color that means the absence of color — because today everyone knows that black is no color and white combines them all. But it was well into the seventeenth century before Newton analyzed sunlight into a spectrum so that the special status of white and black became factual commonplace. Writing (if he really did) "Black is not a color" almost two centuries before Newton, Leonardo would have been the first artist to say such a thing, and would have had a more metaphysical sense of the color in mind than Newton's. 66

The metaphysics in question might even be Plato's. In the *Timaeus*'s physiology of color, white and black are considered apart from the other hues. Plato

assesses the two according to the underlying process of penetrating into the eyes. "What pierces the vision is white, the opposite of that black," so that black blocks vision, black is no sight at all.⁶⁷

As far as anti-fashion is concerned, the special character that blackness possesses is implied in the phrase "the new black." The phrase has become a cliché, not because of anything Gloria Vanderbilt or Diana Vreeland said about pink in India, but beginning in the 1980s, when major US newspapers began quoting fashion experts who called gray, brown, or navy blue "the new black." These first occurrences treat the color being spoken of as the baseline or standard, a theme to be varied for every occasion. Only a few years earlier, North American newspapers had tried out another neologism "the new neutral," intended to express much the same idea. Colors are the new neutrals — or pearl gray is, or pink, or red. If as Barry Popik proposes "new neutral" established the form of the phrase (close to what Wittgenstein would have called the grammar of the phrase), then "neutral" shifts to "black" thanks to black's having occupied a marked neutral status.

The expression implies that black is not a trend among others but stands firm when trends fluctuate. The point does not generalize to other new phenomena. If the new black is always being sought, it almost philosophically speaking cannot be found. For suppose⁷¹ that chartreuse became the new black. Where black has been, chartreuse will be: little chartreuse dresses; motorcycle gangs in chartreuse leather jackets. In a thousand ways chartreuse occupies the place once filled by black.

Then one day anarchists are waving taupe flags instead, and a certain kind of poet wears a taupe turtleneck sweater. It sinks in on you that the change has really taken place when you attend a winter party, and as the guests prepare to leave they stand in the hosts' bedroom sorting out the woolen overcoats, dozens of taupe garments stretched across the bed. You turn to a fellow guest. What do you say? "It looks like taupe has become the new black" – the new black not the new chartreuse. Even if chartreuse were to take over from black, it would be keeping black's seat warm, and any later successor would do the same, becoming what black had once been.

Black and the body

The example of black agrees at enough points with one or more other anti-fashions to confirm certain features of the genre:

a Anti-fashion resists fashion's change in fashion.

This feature is essential to anti-fashion if anything is. The anti-fashion garment is persistent as a type, and individual tokens of anti-fashion dress tend to be durable.

b At the same time, anti-fashion is a socially recognized mode of dress, to that extent resembling a species of fashion.

- c Anti-fashion may derive a seriousness from old religious associations.
- d Anti-fashion speaks of human equality, in part because by remaining the same it frees its wearer from needing either wealth or taste in order to look right but not just for that reason.

In addition to these features modern black dress also participates, to some degree, in the masculinity of uniforms and suits. Black began the nineteenth century belonging exclusively to men.⁷² It took nearly until 1900 before any women's wear was made in black, let alone dress that you could call *standard* for women; though to be sure the twentieth century did change that. Proust put his character Odette de Crécy in black, and in 1926 Coco Chanel introduced the "little black dress" as impossible to imagine in other colors as surrender's white flag is.⁷³ The tattoo had been exclusively male but ceased to be; the shaved head continues to be. Perhaps provisionally another feature can therefore be identified:

e Anti-fashion either belongs to men alone or else begins as masculine before becoming available to women.

The first two of these characteristics of anti-fashion pose an explanatory problem. How can something stand among other modes of dress and yet claim independence from them? The lazy mind might seize upon (a) and (b) together as a contradiction. The casuist might speak of fraudulence, anti-fashion's claim to a transcendent status it has not earned. But even without rushing to charge anti-fashion with logical or moral lapse you can recognize the combination of (a) with (b) as calling for further explanation.

With greater or lesser success (c), (d), and (e) account for the puzzling case of an as-it-were fashion that escapes fashion's reach. If some clothing derives from religious ritual, it will be acknowledged as a way that people dress while still retaining a special privilege. The Bible is a book but also The Book (it is "Scripture," writing as such), both a member of a genus and *sui generis*. And as Lenny Bruce observed, the Catholic church is the only *the* Church. Maybe priestly clothes likewise enter the exchanges that govern all dress without thereby losing the special recognition that is due to a man of *the* cloth.

The standard or default nature of black clothing points toward another kinship among anti-fashions. If being dressed means wearing colored cloth, then if black is not a color, wearing it is not exactly like being dressed.

In Chaucer's poem *The Book of the Duchess*, black cloth already resembles no cloth at all.⁷⁴ The poem tells the tale of a dream. Its narrator fell asleep in agitated gloomy cast of mind and dreamt of coming upon a grieving young knight. "I was war of a man in black." He says again, "And he was clothed al in blakke," preparatory to the knight's telling him about the woman he is mourning.⁷⁵

This woman the knight speaks of was white; the grieving man harps on that color. Her name was Whyte, and a true name it was: "She was both fair and bright,/She hadde not her name wrong." He recalls her white hands. ⁷⁶

The lady's presence brings a magic whiteness, and her leaving plunges the knight into the black of mourning. To this point the colors assemble meanings that would become customary, if they had not already. But at the beginning of his story the knight thinks back to his impressionable youth, when love and such thoughts came to him easily.

Paraunter I was therto most able

As a whyt wal or a table

For hit is redy to cacche and take

Al that men wil therin make.⁷⁷

A white wall or slate ("table") receives all images that are drawn upon it, and the knight in his early days was open to every impression. White takes on every shape imposed upon it; the beloved lady's appeal no doubt derived from her own white readiness to adapt and fit the man who loved her. So as white's opposite, black must be what does not change, and the mourning man's blackness signals his resistance to any fresh impressions. The knight has already said that he cannot be changed, at least not in the sense of being turned away from his grieving. No one can gladden the sorrow that dulls his hue, "that maketh my hue to fade and fade." The effect of his sorrow, the dull black he wears, must be as permanent as the sadness it signifies.⁷⁸

The young knight's true self shows in his dark dress. That true self is his naked self. "I wrecche that deeth hath mad al naked/of alle blisse." But if death has stripped him, the cheerless clothing he has on must be very much like wearing nothing. His black clothes are on him like bare skin, even speaking forth his true thoughts as if they were bare skin.

Meanwhile, bear in mind that the whole story is a dream. What the knight tells the narrator as one man to another takes place within the narrator, with reference to the state of his soul. The knight wears the sorrow that the dreaming narrator had felt. The dream section of this poem started with the narrator in his bed naked; he is still there now, listening to the mourning young man. The narrator in real life is torpid with depression, and lying naked in his bed he dreams of a man in black, a man inside his own soul whom he can look upon as into himself. That other man's black dress is the nakedness of mourning, as if after Heraclitus this clothing might symbolize the body taken by itself.

We have come back to the body signaled by such clothing as the suit. Anne Hollander says in furtherance of this thought that eighteenth-century tailors "offered the perfect classical body, aptly translated into the modern garments that were the most traditionally 'natural' in themselves." The suit brings nudity to mind. "The perfect man, as conceived by English tailors, was part English country gentleman, part innocent natural Adam, and part naked Apollo." Hollander speaks of an "unfallen Adam"; the suit "replaced the same scheme of nude muscles that had been the classical expression" of honesty and rationality. ⁸⁰

150 Philosophy regarding fashion

Black cloth could have arrived at the same effect through its long association with modern suits, or by having come not to count as a color of clothing. Either way black clothing joins blue jeans and uniforms. The trim cut of the military uniform harks back to the eighteenth century's admiration for Greek sculpture, while skintight jeans draw attention to their own associations with the naked body. The final feature of anti-fashion may therefore be:

f Anti-fashion evokes the natural and naked human body.

Notes

- 1 Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, Essay III, §§9–10.
- 2 Yim 2011: 112.
- 3 Farennikova and Prinz 2011: 28.
- 4 Hollander 1993: story begins around 1300, 90; "rise of towns," 362; same old thing would do, 363.
- 5 Harvey 1995: 52-56.
- 6 Hollander 1993: 365.
- 7 Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, bk. II, par. 26.
- 8 Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, bk. II, par. 27.
- 9 Druckerman 2014: 7.
- 10 Aikman 2005a.
- Stern 2004: 13. Stern's book, which includes many photographs in addition to both his own long essay on artists' anti-fashion and a collection of writings from the period it reports on, is an invaluable guide to this general movement which however, it must be cautioned, does not account for everything that one might call anti-fashion. Some of the examples below especially will show that anti-fashions can flourish even when divorced from either philosophical theories on one side or new artistic practices on the other.
- 12 See Behrens 2005: 73.
- 13 Davis 2007.
- 14 Bloomer, "Dress Reform," The Lily 5 (March 1853); quoted in Stern 2004: 82.
- 15 Stern 2004: 15.
- 16 "Die Kunstlerische Hebung der Frauentracht"/"The Artistic Improvement of Women's Clothing"; quoted in Stern 2004: 26.
- 17 This is the argument advanced generally by La Caze 2011.
- 18 Stern 2004: 9.
- 19 Montague 1994.
- Thus: "... certain key questions evaded by the writers of the time: how particular cultural forms came to be equated with the natural; what the common ground was between health and beauty" (Montague 1994: 95).
- 21 Svendsen 2006: 151.
- 22 Lipovetsky 1994: 104.
- 23 Lipovetsky 1994: 105.
- 24 Montague 1994.
- 25 Farennikova and Prinz 2011: 19.
- 26 Fussell 2002: 194.
- 27 Quoted in Stern 2004: 18. Stern adds in his own voice that "men's dress was judged to be less subject to fashion" even by the dedicated opponents of fashion.
- Herod. 7.61.1–7.80.1 details the uniforms of all the component armies serving in Persia's invading force of 1.7 million.
- 29 Fussell 2002: 57.

- 30 Hollander 1994.
- 31 Hollander 1993: 92; see Nunn 2000: 76.
- 32 Henry Finck and Edward Bok, quoted in Schorman 2003: 96. Regarding changes in the suit, also see the black suit, or "tails," which as Philippe Perrot writes "varied only in details: collars rose or fell a bit, lapels grew or diminished, and waists were variously emphasized," Perrot 1994: 114.
- 33 Hollander 1994: 79.
- 34 That speed of change might be misleading. Amelia Bloomer and other reformers of women's clothes first made sporting and specialty trousers possible for women, decades before the change in the 1960s and 1970s. Even so, when that change did come it outmoded "wearing the pants" overnight.
- 35 Davis 2007: 91, 93. Davis passes by the anti-fashions I discuss without a glance, unless they belong in the category of "nonfashion" that he distinguishes from antifashion. For Davis, anti-fashion requires an oppositional goal and oppositional rhetoric. I find that rhetoric important, but I am also struck by the complexity of existing cases of anti-fashion that proceed very well without any attendant discourse - though significantly, the discourse of opposing fashion then comes and attaches itself to those ways of dress.
- 36 Kelly 2006: 95.
- 37 Delingpole 2005.
- 38 Schorman 2003: 29.
- 39 Despite London's reputation in connection with the suit, some steps in its production might have come from France. In 1835 the London periodical The Gentleman's Magazine of Fashions depicted a frock coat with a sewn-on lapel, credited to the famous Parisian tailor Straub. Straub claimed to have invented this technique of cutting the lapel and resewing it to the jacket front to improve the way it lay against the chest, Breward et al. 2004: 41. On Straub's reputation see Trilling 2008: 36, a novel whose character Vincent "had learned the name of Straub, the great tailor of the Restoration," from reading Balzac and Stendhal.
- 40 Sullivan 2006: 83–84; emphasis in original.
- 41 Sullivan 2006: 5.
- 42 Aikman 2005b.
- 43 Fraser 1981: 93.
- 44 Manso 1995: 228; see Sullivan 2006: 87–88.
- 45 Peter Lang Nooch, the founder of Farmer Jeans, quoted in Sullivan 2006: 66.
- 46 "Seduction equipment," Fussell 2002: 50; "nothing is better," Sullivan 2006: 138.
- 47 Her. B93; in Plut. De Pyth. 21. At the risk of taking these appeals to philosophical formulae beyond their breaking point I might paraphrase Wittgenstein. The best picture of the human body is human anti-fashion.
- 48 Bayley 1991: 169.
- 49 Martin 1992: 16.
- 50 He knows how to pick a color! He can endure being choked for hours while pretending not to notice!
- 51 Egyptian priests, Apul. 11.10; but see Swetnam-Burland 2011: 346–347. Joseph, Gen 41:14. Fulfillment of Nazirite vow, Num 6:18. Gentiles shave heads in mourning, Jer 16:6.
- 52 Tattooed Egyptian artifacts, Pinch 1994: 126, 131. Women's tattoos of Bes, Pinch 2002: 118. Jesus and inscribed magic charms, Shab. 104b.
- 53 Nunn 2000: black edged out blue, 130; men's clothes in 1870, 167; the attempt to colorize, 180.
- 54 Harvey 1995: 29–34.
- 55 Harvey 1995: 14.
- 56 Hollander 1993: "ancient flavor of antifashion," 365; on black dress, 365–390; "free will," 365.

- 57 "Universal equality," Baudelaire 1972 [1846]: par. 7; see Harvey 1995: 26–27; "removing differences of class," *The Blackshirt* (November 24–30, 1933), 5; quoted in Harvey 1995: 242.
- 58 Magicians in Roman Egypt, Graf 1997: 104, 115.
- 59 Roqueplan, Parasino; quoted in Perrot 1994: 34.
- 60 Melagchimos: mourning clothes, Aesch. Choeph. 11, Eur. Phoen. 372; fleece, Eur. El. 513; grave, Eur. Rhes. 962. "Black-clad [melampeplos] Death," Eur. Alc. 843–844.
- 61 Claudin, writing in Le Petit Moniteur du soir, quoted in Perrot 1994: 32.
- 62 Black dress: *tenue de ville*, "strictly forbidden," Fussell 2002: 68; lawyers and judges, Pastoureau 2009: 95; knights incognito, ibid.: 73; diabolical black, ibid.: 52.
- Batchelor 2000. Thus e.g.: "Since Antiquity, color has been systematically marginalized, reviled, diminished and degraded. Generations of philosophers, artists, art historians and cultural theorists ... have kept this prejudice alive" (22).
- 64 "The extinction of color was a political signal that a new social order had come into being. It also signaled the onset of a new ethic based on will, self-denial, thrift, and merit," Perrot 1994: 30.
- 65 Adorno 1984: blackness in art, 58-60; "the antithesis," 59.
- 66 Trattato della pittura; quoted in Pastoureau 2009: 12, 177. But the authorship of the claim has been disputed. It has been attributed to both Leonardo and Manet; in neither case have I tracked the quote down. Leonardo did say that white was not a color, Da Vinci 2002: 111, in sec. 156 of his treatise on painting, regarding blue shadows. (Would he also have said the same about black, given that he said it about white?) In Manet's case the sentiment is treated as ubiquitous; or is attributed to popular books on his work that in fact do not contain the sentence; or in one case is cited as Clemenceau's claim about what Manet had often said, Li Bassi 2002: 31n3.
- 67 Pl. Ti.: physiology of color, 67b-68c; "pierces the vision," 67e.
- New blacks: gray, Los Angeles Times March 4, 1983, V6, and New York Times May 27, 1986, C12; brown, Washington Post March 15, 1984, D9; navy, Washington Post April 3, 1984, C6; and Los Angeles Times October 26, 1984, IV15. These examples appear in Zimmer 2006, along with refutation of accounts that credit Vanderbilt or Vreeland with the phrase.
- 69 New neutral: colors, New York Times, September 16, 1979, NJ16; pearl gray, Chicago Tribune, November 12, 1979, B3; pink, Chicago Tribune, October 19, 1980, B1; red, Globe and Mail (Toronto), November 24, 1981, F6; collected in Popik 2006.
- 70 Why should black not white be the neutral shade? For that matter why not undyed fabric? This last might lead us to another anti-fashion. Anne Scott-James wrote in 1952, "The English, alas, hate fashion," citing a lingering Puritanism that makes those people "feel shame in all colours but beige" (quoted in Watt 1999: 150). Linen and cotton can both be called beige if they have not been dyed. If Scott-James was correct to identify a tending toward beige as a British standard, that standardization might begin in the color of cloth that lacks all dye.
- 71 Ken Johnson developed this example in conversation.
- 72 Harvey 1995: 195, 225.
- 73 Pastoureau 2009: 189.
- 74 For a reading of this poem see Harvey 1995: 50–51. But Harvey's reading stresses the migration of black clothing inward, passing from a ritual costume that symbolizes mourning to the expression of a psychological state. Nothing in the coming paragraphs denies Harvey's interpretation; but Chaucer also invests black with more particular associations than Harvey's treatment of the poem touches on.
- 75 Chaucer, Book of the Duchess: aware of man in black, line 445; clothed all in black, 457.
- 76 Chaucer, Book of the Duchess: name not wrong, 950–951; her white hands, 955.
- 77 Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess*: I was as capable of that as a white wall or slate, for it is ready to catch and take all that men will make, 779–782.

- 78 Chaucer, Book of the Duchess: knight unchangeable, 559; sorrow dulls hue, 563-564.
- 79 Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess*: wretch I am that death has stripped naked of all bliss, 577–578.
- 80 Hollander 1994: "perfect body," 87–88; Adam and Apollo, 92; "unfallen Adam," 88; "nude muscles," 91.
- 81 Fussell 2002, 15.

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6 Fashion in antiquity

Socrates never sounds as puritanical anywhere else as he does in the *Phaedo*. Philosophizing in his cell during the last hours before his execution, he denies the true philosopher all bodily pleasures as distractions from the one legitimate enterprise of preparing for death. Among the unworthy pursuits Socrates includes fine clothes:

What about the other ways of caring for the body? Does it seem to you that such a man [a philosopher] will be led toward them much? For example, won't he disrespect rather than respect the possession of distinguished cloaks and shoes, and other bodily adornments, aside from whatever share in them is necessary?¹

And it feels natural to count his remarks in the *Phaedo* as illustrating the philosopher's contempt for fashion.²

The distaste for ostentation is not presented as idiosyncratic. If Plutarch's *Life of Solon* reports true stories from an earlier time, Solon introduced sumptuary legislation to Athens, outlawing expensive funerals whose ceremonies would call for impressive wardrobes. And when visiting Lydia, according to Herodotus, Solon was apparently offended by the sight of Croesus decked out in fine clothes.³ Aeschylus pictures the king of Argos similarly shocked at how opulently Danaus and his daughters were dressed.⁴ The stories do not have to be true to be relevant. If they are traditional narrative elements that one connected with every prestigious life, Socrates appears all the more representative of the sage in his disrespect for fine clothing.

In the *Republic*, watching the city he imagined as it slides toward tyranny, Socrates pauses to acknowledge the attractions of democratic culture. The city governed by democracy has the variegated charm of a multicolored *himation* "cloak," the kind that is judged most beautiful "by children and women when they see anything colorful." This passage too looks like a philosopher's crotchety rejection of the feminine finery that accounts for most fashion. In fact it is worse than that, given that the talk of a cloak enters the conversation as a simile. The clothing is supposed to be the self-evidently undesirable analogue to a form of governance whose deceptive charms the reader might not yet have learned to distrust.

The threat of anachronism: ancient fashion?

Today, people who buy expensive clothes and dress with vanity follow fashion. It just does not happen that someone would devote time and money to wardrobe and not know or care what is *in* this year. Such behavior may be logically possible but it no longer seems to be humanly possible. That is where a big budget for clothing goes, to high-profile designers, now that fabric itself has become fairly cheap.

But just because fancy dress is fashionable today, does not make attentiveness to clothing equally a pursuit of fashion in Plato's Greece. As Chapter 5 already mentioned, historians date what the modern world recognizes as fashion only to 1300, with the transition from cloth draped over the body to cloth that was cut out and stitched to fit the body and even reshape it.⁶ Categorizing phenomena more finely, Gilles Lipovetsky (and he is not the only one) distinguishes between that first beginning and a second movement in fashion that parted ways with the first around 1850. Only the second form possesses all the attributes of modern fashion, including the centralized and self-conscious invention of new styles, their dissemination, and finally their adoption by knowing consumers.⁷

The connections with modernity and subsequently with modernism are not incidental. Along with fashion's first beginning came other indices of modernity, from urbanization to the bourgeoisie. The second moment of fashion coincided with the modern world's sensitization to its own problematic nature. No wonder that in some European languages a single word, *mode* or *moda*, means both fashion and modernity, both phenomena derived from Latin's *modus* "method, manner," loosely *the way we do things now*.

If fashion does belong to modernity, then attributing fashions and the quest for fashionability to ancient Athenians must be an anachronism – to say nothing of finding opposition to fashion among their philosophers. On the canonical view of fashion, Plato could no more gripe about it than he could tie a Windsor knot. Even if he knotted a strip of cloth around his neck as a quiet signal at the Academy for lectures to end, and even if, while looping the cloth, he happened to duplicate the motions that men use today when they tie their neckties, this would not make Plato's knot a Windsor knot in the absence of its modern context. Suggesting otherwise would be perverse. Is it also perverse to propose that something like fashion discourse existed in ancient Greece?

If dressing finely (in the way that Socrates denies to the philosopher) does not suffice for fashionable dress, consider the biblical example of Zephaniah railing against those of his own country who put on foreign styles. Athens had no Hebrew prophets to condemn behavior, but some Athenians did adopt foreign ways. For this they faced the accusation of "medizing," turning themselves into a Mede or Persian. This comes closer to fashion talk; how close? On the one hand popular changes in dress, on the other a lone objector's resistance to change. If these two elements bring us to the world of fashion, then the remarks appearing in Plato's dialogues belong in the same large conversation with modern philosophers' complaints about modern fashion.

Cautions about historical discontinuity have their limits, after all. Students of antiquity distinguish ancient tragedy from its modern namesake, and Athenian democracy from versions at work today, but not to the point of ignoring similarities between ancient and modern forms. Athenian democracy may have run by direct vote with no bureaucracy, but it still worried about unlawful legislation and excessive personal power. Athenian tragedy was performed in masks with modal music among religious and civic rituals that lack modern equivalents, but it dramatized moral crises in the lives of significant individuals as modern tragedies do. Seeing the distance between Plato's talk of dress and Thoreau's does not rule out all ground common to the two of them.

This chapter will ask whether elements of ancient talk about dress bring such discussions near enough to modern talk about fashion to warrant uniting the two conversations. What people wore informs this inquiry, but I will put more emphasis on how they understood what they wore. Focusing on actual dress would make comparisons awkward, when most Greek clothing was based on large rectangles of cloth hung on bodies or wrapped around them, fastened at the shoulders, rather than across the chest with buttons or at the waist with belts. Ancient discussions of dress on the other hand draw closer to modernity by speaking of (1) diversity in dress, (2) change in dress, and (3) justification for that change.

- Diversity: People customarily wear certain clothes; that is, ways of dressing are not natural or fixed for all time. This means among other things that classical Greek literature contains no analogues to Genesis 3, neither the fig-leaf story that finds a first type of clothing in genital-shaped plant materials suitable for covering shame, nor the animal-skin story in which gods produce the first genuine clothes for humans.9
- Change: People change what they wear. Foreigners and other strangers introduce new possibilities, but wherever the clothes come from they become everyone's way of dress, a universal costume.
- 3 Justification: The changes that take place run the risk of seeming arbitrary. Many individual cases of change in dress are described as having occurred purely from imitativeness. At the same time people may be seen to have refused or resisted reasonable changes in dress solely because they wanted to keep wearing what everyone around them wore. By implication, socially motivated changes in dress are both the norm to be expected, and unjustifiable.

The grounds for such claims about Athenians and clothing will have to be found among literary sources. Testimony from elite authors threatens to exclude much of the population, for even in a democracy those with the time and training to write did not represent the populace. On the other hand it is also true that visual evidence is unlikely to help. Vase paintings show what Athenians wore or what they liked to picture people wearing. But such images rarely have the wherewithal to show changes in wardrobe customs, or to identify the reasons given for such changes.

By comparison the authors of historical prose try to explain the social phenomena they describe. Herodotus and Thucydides are not philosophers or poets. But they purport to describe the world they live in with a fact-gathering agenda not to be found in tragedy, philosophy, or oratory.

Diversity and contingency in dress

A sense of the contingency in what people wear is attested in the earliest written sources that either come from Athens or would have been known to Athenians. The clothing that identifies nationalities and even constitutes their identities could have been otherwise, as witness the fact that it changes readily, i.e. that it *had* been otherwise.

Aeschylus is the first Athenian playwright whose works survive, and on many chronologies his earliest extant play is *Persians*, in which the first character to speak is Atossa, Darius's widow and mother of Xerxes the reigning king. Before news of the Persian defeat has reached them, Atossa tells the chorus about her disquieting dream. Two sisters are standing together, "one wearing Persian dress, the other in Dorian." They are both being yoked, but whereas the Persian maiden acquiesces in her servitude the one in Dorian clothes rebels.¹⁰

Strictly speaking "Dorian" denoted a dialect of classical-era Greek. (Another dialect was Ionian, closely related to the Attic Greek spoken in Athens.) The people who spoke Dorian Greek occupied most of the Peloponnesian peninsula. Sparta was Dorian, most of its allies too. This amounted to a linguistic identity but also ethnicity. Athens supported the cities of Asia Minor's coast in their original uprising against Persia because of linguistic and cultural ties between Athenians and the Ionians who made up Greek Asia Minor. For the same reason Athens and Sparta saw themselves as natural enemies.¹¹

Aeschylus is not contrasting the Peloponnesian Greeks with Persia to make the Dorians as opposed to other Greeks the force that halted the Persian Empire. Atossa has already spoken of the *Iaonôn gên* "Ionian land" against which her son's army marched, as if Dorian and Ionian Greece were identical in her eyes. A Persian messenger will soon tell of the battle at Salamis that (according to Aeschylus) decided the war against Persia. Salamis was a naval battle to which Athens contributed the largest number of Greek ships, and Themistocles the Greeks' de facto strategist was Athenian. At least for this Athenian playwright, it was Athens that defeated Persia, as the *Persians*' references to the city make clear. It follows that "Dorian" clothing does not refer only to the clothing that Spartans wore, but has to mean Greek clothing. Plain Dorian dress may have been seen by Greeks as older and standard Greek, compared with the more luxurious Ionian costume. Or else, because Atossa is a Persian queen, Aeschylus wants to imagine her perception of the Greeks, the rough Spartan wardrobe striking her as more foreign to Persian sumptuousness.

Atossa does not really think as a Persian. Her categorization of Greek and Persian gives away her playwright's view of the world, portraying Persian subjects as docile and accustomed to servitude, while the eleutheromanic Greeks insist on independence even when it brings no material advantage. The broadest forms of Greek ethnocentrism saw *barbaroi* as subservient by nature, therefore incapable of living in autonomous cities. ¹³

But it is just the ethnocentricity of this putative dream image that indicates its subversive touch. In a tragedy that is supposed to be crowing over the Persian defeat, this opening image of the two ethnicities makes them sisters, hence closely related and comparable in status. And as sisters they must look alike. Greeks and Persians are not being imagined as inherently different-looking, even by the victorious Greeks. Only their clothes distinguish them.

The *Persians* thematizes its characters' clothes. Xerxes comes back from his disastrous campaign in rags. The destruction of his imperial finery is implausible as fact: Aeschylus, who fought at Salamis, would have known that Xerxes faced no danger to his person. As metaphor however the king in rags represents the shredding that the Greeks liked to think they subjected Persia to. So too the distinction between ethnicities on the basis of what they wear shows a willingness to make a people's costume a symbol for national identity.

It must have been equally true for Aeschylus's fellow Athenians that the greatest differences in dress were to be observed between people of different ethnicities. Persians were the paradigmatic non-Greeks for Athenians in the fifth century, unignorable in the way that colonizing invaders are; Thracians and Scythians were plentiful in Athens too, if most often as slaves, therefore also familiar as types. In an earlier time it must have been the Phrygians who most often served as chattel slaves, because the word "Phrygian" could function as synonymous with "slave." Athenian vase paintings depicted these familiar ethnicities wearing the markers of their home countries: Persians in trousers and slippers, Thracians with their fawn-skin hats.

So those Athenians who read the first sizeable prose work produced in Greek that still survives, the *Histories* of Herodotus, or who heard him read selections from that book aloud (according to tradition, at the Olympics), would have expected his descriptions of foreigners to include foreign wardrobes. And when describing Babylon and Egypt and other non-Greek lands, Herodotus does recount their inhabitants' notable characteristics – buildings, worship, cookery. He goes into detail about Babylonians' combination of linen and woolen tunics and short white coat with their turbans and Boeotian-style slippers. Egyptian priests wear only linen and their shoes are made of papyrus.¹⁶

Many passages in Herodotus sound as if they exoticize foreigners. Looking for a people's noteworthy characteristics makes him highlight their differences from Greeks. The men of Egypt urinate sitting down and the women standing. In Lydia, as in most barbarian lands, even men are not to be seen naked. But the *Histories* needs to be read with greater care than such loose judgments are usually based on. Although identifying cultural differences may in general reflect your sense of the superiority of your home culture, Herodotus's reports from foreign countries do not put Greeks in the position of the standard or neutral culture against which all others are measured as departures. Herodotus sees differences in human customs as the occasions for cultural influence not insuperable conflict.

Diffusion is a constant process in the *Histories*, taking place in opposite directions simultaneously, as Herodotus would not have made it do if he saw non-Greeks as inferior or even as permanently exotic. The Persians love to take on foreign customs; witness their adopting the Medes' clothing after conquering them. And when the Lydian king Croesus has been defeated by Cyrus, he advises Cyrus to pacify the Lydian populace by making the men wear tunics under their cloaks. Those clothes will emasculate them. This sense of a feminizing way of dress implies the arbitrary nature of national dress, as Aeschylus's dream image also did. Lydians do not wear what they traditionally did because nothing else was possible. They happened on this kind of clothing, and Cyrus should not find it hard to put them into another kind. Thoreau's shipwrecked sailors find clothes wherever they land and claim them as a uniform; Lydians are ready to change en masse into tunics; for that matter Greeks are ready to change too, if new clothes come along. There seems to be historical truth behind this general principle of diffusion, as evidenced by the Etruscans' adoptions of Greek dress. ²⁰

Military examples do not reveal as much about how Herodotus understands dress, because the purpose that national costumes have on the battlefield requires that those uniforms not change. (This is the feature of uniforms that made them examples of anti-fashion.) In wartime soldiers change their uniform only to deceive the enemy. National dress is simply too practical as it is – showing combatants who is on their side and who the enemy is – for an army to want to change it with the wind. Herodotus does present a treasury of sartorial information as he moves toward his grand subject the wars against Persia, and a long stretch of Book 7 of the *Histories* details the Persian muster for the march against Greece. Herodotus names every nation represented in the empire's forces, identifying the participants by weaponry and dress; and there might be a sense of costume's contingency, if only a sense, in the mere fact of so much variety.

Take just the hats. Herodotus makes sure to tell what all the Persian troops had on their heads, one nation's soft felt hats, another nation's pointed ones, someone else's headgear feathers. After all hats are the easiest things to spot in a massive army marching toward you. Herodotus draws no moral from this muster, but his reader may well ask what hats can mean when so many variations on them are possible.²¹

The Persians' trousers make an ambiguous case. Early in the history, Croesus plans to go to war against Persia and is advised not to. He would be facing men in leather *anaxuridas* "trousers," this information implying that men who dress that way fight hard. But in the middle of the *Histories* Aristagoras is rallying the Spartans against Persia and wants them to understand how easily they can win. He points out that the Persians fight in *anaxuridas* and turbans.²²

Which is the right way to read men's trousers? Herodotus does not step in to say. But Croesus does lose to Persia and the Spartans finally win, which makes both readings correct – which in turn tells against reading anything into a man's leg wear, and may well have been implied by Herodotus as the meaning of the incompatible remarks. If Persia had worn Dorian clothes as her Greek sister did, the outcome of history would not have changed.

Change in dress

The Athenians had practices resembling the ones that Zephaniah objected to, the importation of foreign dress, as when the Persian parasol came into Athenian practice as an accessory for women.²³ Later in the same spirit the Roman Empire would legislate against Saxon trousers and cloaks from northern Gaul, among other items borrowed from Rome's barbarian neighbors.²⁴

But the awareness that ways of dress change comes closer to what we call fashion consciousness when one does not interpret the change in moral terms, whether as treachery or as womanly weakness. And in general, if changing one's mode of dress can be wrong, the differences among peoples are not clearly contingent; for then a change is not just a transition from one costume to its moral equivalent but a transformation for the better or worse.

Here there is no better guide than Herodotus. He knows that people may interpret changes of costume moralistically, but he dilutes such moralizing by reporting on it, best of all when he tells his Greek readers about non-Greeks appalled at their compatriots' adopting Greek ways. For here the readers can see a change in costume that is manifestly unobjectionable, to which someone nevertheless objected.

Scylas, the king of the Scythians, becomes so infatuated with Greek culture that at night he walks around secretly in Greek clothing. He takes his Hellenizing another step further when he tries to have himself initiated into the Dionysian mysteries, but at that point the Scythians behead him for his adaptability. Meanwhile Greeks take on foreign ways of dress. They outfit their statues of Athena with the kinds of leather clothes that Libyan women wear. If it bothers them to hear of their own cultural borrowing, even in ritual practice, the story about Scylas is Herodotus's implicit reproach. You didn't think adopting foreign clothes was bad when Scylas did it. Why be as xenophobic as the Scythians?²⁵

Both of these examples link manner of dress to worship. Presumably the example from Zephaniah also does, if he wants God to punish the people who wear foreign clothes. But Herodotus makes the diffusion of religious ideas the natural way of things and the motor of culture. Egyptians taught Greeks the names of the gods;²⁶ and whatever Herodotus means by that puzzling claim, he is attributing a central element of Greek culture to imitative diffusion, doing as the neighbors do. If change in dress resembles change in worship, and if Greek religious worship depends on straight cultural borrowing as Herodotus alleges it to, then clothing really has been found on the beach as Thoreau's acerbic sentence would have it.

Another story has no religion. It begins with a battle between Athens and Aegina, the island state near Athens. When an Athenian division invades the island, all but one of the invaders die in the fight. After the battle this lone man returns home to Athens, where the women are enraged that he should have survived when their husbands died. In their fury the women take the dress pins that hold their robes together, and stab the man to death.²⁷

Herodotus does not name the garment that Athenian women wore pinned together, though discussions sometimes call it a *peplos*. (In *Persians*, Atossa refers

to the Greeks' clothing as Dorian *peplos*, apparently using that word in a generic sense.) Herodotus does say that the robe was Dorian and held together with large pins, rather than sewn as luxurious Ionian garments were.

Needless to say the stabbing horrifies the men of Athens. Thenceforth they force their women to dress as Ionian women do, in dresses that are sewn together. "Before that the Athenian women wore Dorian clothes," Herodotus informs his readers, "which are very close to the Corinthian. They were changed to the linen kithôn, so that the women not have pins to use." Among the Greeks the Ionians had a reputation for softness and luxurious living – not surprisingly, considering that the basis for comparison was the Peloponnesian Dorians exemplified by Sparta. The sewn clothing, though more expensive to produce, would have sat more comfortably on its wearer's shoulders.

Although it is hard to imagine that any such stabbing took place, the story points to Greek categories of thought about wardrobe and violence. Or rather, what makes it so unlikely that the stabbing took place also shows that the story manifests Greek attitudes. First of all, prominent myths already featured women wielding garment pins. The daughters of Danaus rose up as one on their collective wedding night (forty-nine of the fifty did) and stabbed their new bridegrooms to death. In *Hecuba* Euripides depicts the women of a defeated Troy using their pins against the Greek attackers.²⁹ Given such stories already in circulation, it would be strange if an attack of the same kind subsequently took place in reality; but again, given such stories in circulation, the one that Herodotus tells confirms that this kind of attack made sense to a Greek mind.

The Greeks were not alone in imagining the belligerent potential in women's adornments. Skeletons have been found in Iran and other Near Eastern grave sites – mostly women's skeletons, buried late in the second millennium BC – containing garment fasteners akin to those used by Dorian women, but cut and shaped to resemble little daggers. They are not weapons, but they are shaped as they are because of their resemblance to weapons. It must not have taken much imagination to notice that a sturdy dress pin could draw blood; or, it took a certain very common kind of imagination. Even if Herodotus invented the story he did not invent the suspicion that women who put their minds to it could do some damage with their pinned robes.

The story of the women's dress pins thus joins up with the *Histories*' observations on soldiers' uniforms, not in the sense that fighting men are dressed in a certain way but suggesting that even civilians' clothes can be arms. Because these are civilians rather than soldiers, an advanced civilization has reason to change that bellicose dress. Just as Croesus proposed a change of clothing for Lydians to make them more pliant subjects to Cyrus, the Athenian men pacify their wives with luxurious Ionian clothes. Their docilification is not completely different from one attributed to Periander, the tyrant of Corinth, who ordered all Corinthian women stripped to quiet his wife's ghost.³¹ Peace in the city requires the women's disarmament.

Even if the story about dress pins is true, it takes the moral sting out of the change in clothing. It implies that Athenian women's Ionian styles do not

signify their deep-running Ionian identity but could have been otherwise, even could have easily been otherwise. The Athenian women's costume has already been deflated of ethnic significance; and considering that the *Histories* likely appeared during the Peloponnesian War, when Athens advertised and exploited its own Ionian status, this story locates the meaning of dress at a remove from the meaning it had appeared to have. Athenian women dress as the Ionians do, not because they share ethnic identity, nor because Athenians and Dorians are such different nations, but thanks to this freak occurrence.

Herodotus takes the point further, casting doubt on his own story.³² Foreigners return into an anecdote that had seemed all Greek. "Actually such clothing," Herodotus says of the Athenian ladies' new dress, "is not originally Ionian but rather Carian. For long ago all women in Greece wore the clothes now known as Dorian." If this is true then the Greek sister in Queen Atossa's dream might be wearing Dorian clothes because the dream's author Aeschylus still remembered when every Greek woman wore the same. By the time Herodotus wrote his *Histories* only the people of the Peloponnese retained the custom.

When Herodotus says that the Athenian women had worn Dorian clothes of a sort like the Corinthians', that stylistic special closeness insinuates a causal connection. Athenian women had dressed this way because the Corinthians did, deliberately imitating the Corinthians. In that case the change into Ionian linen was a return to old ways. But the sentence immediately following, about the linen's being Carian not Ionian, rejects that possibility. The Athenians might have enjoyed a close ethnic connection with the Greek Ionians, but all groups of Greeks had originally dressed as the Dorians do, with pins in their gowns. This change to how Athenians dress now was the imitation; the naturalseeming clothes of today are the innovation. And, as elsewhere in the Histories, beliefs and behaviors diffuse across political boundaries. The Carians of Asia Minor dressed this way – if Herodotus himself had really had a Carian father, ³³ he would be in a position to know that – and the Ionian Greeks their neighbors on Asia Minor's coast imitated them. The Athenians saw the sewn Carian tunic and they wanted to look sybaritically Ionian too, and followed. The legend of the murderous women now looks like a cover story to rationalize the adoption of foreign dress.

More to the point, what is Greek dress and native to a population, what is Greek but foreign, what is barbarous – none of these features are visible in the clothing. Without historical information everything done now seems natural and native. History shows how easily it could have been otherwise. One survivor more or less and wardrobe changes entirely.

Thucydides tells of changes in dress too. He only turns to the subject once, but that he has anything to say about clothing is already remarkable. Women, money, love, and food (always visible in Herodotus's *Histories*) have close to no place in the story of the Peloponnesian War, and neither does dress. But the opening speculative section of Thucydides's history tells what he thinks there is to report about ancient times, and there he lets himself talk about clothing. He

does not seem to have heard about the women and their deadly pins – but then he never alludes to Herodotus directly – and yet he speaks as Herodotus did about Athenians, Ionians, and Spartans; about the dress that is weaponry; and about the change in dress that his contemporaries consider a civilizing change.

The speculative prehistory does not make consistent progress. The war that Thucydides will speak of killed more troops and brought more damage to Greece than the great Trojan War from which Greeks thought they had advanced into higher civilization.³⁴ If anything, the peacetime of classical Greece brought economic growth, which made possible larger fleets and armies, therefore a war of unprecedented destructiveness.

Nevertheless Thucydides looks for patterns in the history he surveys broadly. It is hard not to think of his first great English translator Hobbes when the *History* shows decentralized warfare – all against all – yielding before the militias of strong states so that a civilized condition can emerge. And after piracy and navies the story of civilization continues in the language of clothing. All Greece used to go around armed – which means, maximally dressed. "They made a regular habit of being armed, just as the barbarians do." Thucydides identifies parts of Greece that keep to the same practice in his own day; but at one time all men dressed in arms and armor. ³⁵

The Athenians were among the first to "lay down the iron," going in a single step from armor to aristocratic luxury: long linen chitons under their cloaks, their hair pinned up with golden *tettiges* "grasshoppers." Those Athenians' way of life was *trupherôteron* "daintier," and the clothing that signified such softness persisted until *ou polus chronos* "not much time" ago. "And for a long time the same outfit [skeuê] lasted among the Ionian elders, because of their kinship" – he seems to mean their kinship with Athens. Thucydides has noticed that the upper strata of aristocratic societies tend to wear both the manliest battle gear and its apparent opposite, finery that approaches effeminacy.

Thucydides speaks only of what the men are wearing. If he intends to contradict Herodotus's story about Athenian women's adopting Ionian dress, there is no tendentiousness to suggest such a thing. But it is notable that where Herodotus told of Athenians imitating Ionians, Thucydides keeps the mechanism, the imitative dress, and reverses the direction that the imitation takes, Athenians going first on his account and Ionians following; and in both cases the change is from weaponry to soft luxury.

Thucydides is not being an Athenian chauvinist. He willingly attributes the subsequent stage in dress to Sparta. The Spartans were the first to dress *metriai* "moderately" and *es ton nun tropon* "in the present manner" or "the new style," for the wealthy Lakedaimonians changed in other respects too to dress like the majority. Common-man dress was a Spartan innovation, as was stripping for exercise. "In the old days, even in the Olympic games, athletes competed wearing loincloths [diazômata] around their privates, which ended not many years ago."

Having begun his synopsis of wardrobes with the ancient armed condition common to Greeks and barbarians, Thucydides concludes with a contrast

between the two. Barbarians still gird themselves to box and wrestle, especially the ones in Asia. "And one might demonstrate many other old Greek practices to be the same as barbarian ones of today"; whereupon Thucydides goes back to military and political history, piracy and the placement of cities.³⁸

Ways of dress change. Dress can be read. (Athenian tragedy too sometimes implies that ways of dress carry significance. The *peplos* carries, quite concisely, the meaning of a dangerous woman.³⁹) New styles in clothing spread, presumably because the imitators want to resemble those they imitate, and for the specific reason that they approve of what they read the new styles to be saying. The Athenian men put their wives into sewn tunics, simultaneously giving the women the glamor of Asians and enhancing their soft harmlessness.⁴⁰ These same men simplify their own costume to share in the exotic anything-but-harmless Spartan look. What Thucydides and Herodotus see in Athens is what philosophers would continue to see in later centuries (even if lamenting the fact), when they noticed wardrobes changing according to causal principles not previously explained.

Justifications for change in dress

This last element of fashion discourse distinguishes what Herodotus and Thucydides say from those acknowledgments of variation in dress that treat the variations as uncaused. Even if the explanation is a rationalizing one (men wanting safety in their homes), the fact that an author feels the need to propose such an account implies a basic element of fashion, that changes in dress need accounting for.

The justificatory nature of the narrative in Thucydides is evident in his beginning and ending with barbarians. The original condition for the Greeks was a state of war on all sides, as it was for non-Greeks; and (when the story ends) the present-day athletic nudity of the Greeks contrasts with the loincloth that they once wore, and that barbarians continue to wear, given the general identity between barbarians of the present and Greeks of the past.

But if barbarism either is, or is indistinguishable from, the original state that Greeks had been in, then (for a Greek) that original state cannot also be the default or standard, let alone a condition to which a Greek wanted to return. Starting out on a par with barbarians says that the interest in a historical narrative does not lie with the first phase or originary state in that narrative.

Is the story of Athenian wardrobe changes a teleological account? Consider the pains Thucydides is taking to invert the counterpart story in Herodotus. Both stories chronicle a decisive change in Athenian dress from dangerous, or armed, to safe and soft. Herodotus described the change in women's clothes and Thucydides speaks of men; for Herodotus the change takes Athenians from Dorian to Ionian clothing, for Thucydides the reverse. It has the sound of a concocted inversion.

Why would Thucydides rig the story to move from native Ionian dress to a Dorian costume, an older form of dress that he turns into a later appropriation?

The answer must lie in this passage's image of the Spartans. Although Thucy-dides in general supplies plenty of evidence supporting history's judgment of Sparta as a cruel culture whose Spartiate minority oppressed the Helot serfs, this segment of his history is silent about Helots and the Spartan tyranny. What matters about the governing Spartiates just now is that they treat one another as equals. Their attitude has a double significance, equalizing all those within the ruling class by way of separating them from everyone below — which is the double meaning of the English word "peer," one who is both fellow and lord. When speaking of Greek dress, his focus on the Spartiates alone lets Thucy-dides read Spartan clothing, and then Spartan athletic nudity, as the effacement of class distinction. Within their governing-class ranks they deny rank and inequality. As a result his story progresses from the condition of total opposition, all against all, through the symbolic remainder of that differentiation that is aristocratic luxury, to moderate dress that everyone can wear alike, finally to arrive at the eradication of social difference in athletic nudity.

Athens was the democracy in Greece. It was not perfectly democratic but remarkably so, and certainly democratic when compared with Sparta. It is impossible to tell whether the beginnings of democratic rule in Athens (just before the wars against Persia) immediately brought democratic culture along with it, with suspiciousness toward monarchies, with the rhetoric of equality and welfare, and growing inclusiveness in political offices. By the time of Pericles (just before the wars against Sparta), where Thucydides formally begins his narrative, Athens saw itself as democratic and it faulted other cultures for failing to be.

So the story of Athenian clothing looks teleological, originating as it does in the barbarism that is a state of nature and ending in a most democratic equality. As fashions do, Athenian ways of dress lose their practical significance and come to bear the meanings they have symbolically. (One strong current in anti-fashion is its stress on the practical or natural; whence the complaints about fashions that prevented women from moving and breathing.) The new-style plain dress betokened male equality because, as Thoreau's seamstress might have put it, they wear it nowadays. When you put this on, you will look like them. Nudity as the end-stage can't perform any of the practical functions that clothes might have; its meaning resides entirely in its symbolism.

The twist is that this wardrobe representing democracy came not only from a foreign culture but from the one Greek culture that most opposed democracy. In a teleological narrative, Athenian dress – in this respect *not* subordinate to fashions – would have developed with the democratizing culture. You could see an internal necessity to such development. Instead we are back at the mechanism of imitation. Strangers bring new ways of dress to the locals. Thucydides is describing fashion inasmuch as he finds its imitative origins rendering its meaning contingent.

As the preceding chapters have pointed out, the actual dynamics of modern taste and fashion presuppose individual innovation not merely collective imitation. The ancient world had innovators. The sophist Hippias attended the

Olympics one year wearing clothing, shoes, and jewelry entirely of his own making.⁴¹ Aristotle later reported that Hippodamus, whom he calls the first city planner, wore the same cheap clothes in every season. The gratuitousness of this detail gives it weight. How Hippodamus dressed could not matter to his merits as a planner, so Aristotle must be including the detail not as a comment on the urban plan Hippodamus came up with, but simply because it was such a notable fact about the man. It is a curiosity worth passing along for its own sake.⁴²

Thucydides ignores such innovations by individuals. Herodotus locates them safely far from Greece, as in the person of an eccentric king of the Scythians. And Scylas distinguishes himself from other Scythians by imitating the Greeks. Herodotus accounts for differentiation with the same single cause, imitation. For the Greek historians, fashion consists in collective assimilative behavior, not also in special acts of differentiation. But this is to say that ancient commentators on dress resemble Kant and Santayana and Rousseau in seeing imitation worn on every sleeve. Kant is describing fashion even if he is describing it incompletely, and so is Thucydides.

Plato's Republic

If you agree with me that Herodotus and Thucydides are describing dress behavior recognizably similar to fashion, it will be somewhat easier to attribute a stance against fashion to Plato. He will not have to be registering his resistance long before fashion ever begins.

The passages from Plato that this chapter began with are consistent with a stance against fashion: the *Phaedo* on fancy clothes, the *Republic* when it compares democracy to an iridescent cloak. But these passages fall short of commenting on the social engine that creates fashion. If the gaudy cloak belongs to democracy then maybe it testifies to the collective imitation, the mass thinking, that modern ages associate with fashion. But only maybe; the *Republic* doesn't say enough.

Lars Svendsen speaks of Plato's "skepticism about clothes," and the "somewhat fraudulent" beauty that clothing is said to have in the *Hippias Major*. The thought that clothes can elicit a deceptive idea of their beauty implies that they are judged to be beautiful on mistaken grounds, as we might have a deceptive idea of how small an object is if someone with huge hands were holding it. The charge of false grounds for beauty is not only frequent in attacks on fashion but even characteristic of such attacks. Then there are the passages in Plato that would prohibit innovations in music. The thought that clothing in its present form is falsely valued (evidently, so valued by mass culture), together with the desire to ward off trendsetting changes, would keep any fashion industry out of Platonic states. Does it follow that Plato knows what fashion is?

What persuades me that he does is a passage from Book 5 of the *Republic*. Book 5 contains most of the dialogue's details about the good city that the *Republic* proposes to found. Book 5 reveals specific plans concerning women and men, the marriages between them, and the children those marriages

produce. Women belong among the new city's guardians, which means both its military caste and the ruling cadre that will emerge from among the soldiers.

Socrates pictures male and female guardians together at the gymnasium. It goes without saying – Socrates trying to sound offhand about this – that men and women alike, the old and the young, will strip for their collective gymnastics. We can expect that the sight of naked women running and wrestling in public will make people laugh. They will *really* laugh at the thought of old ladies' jumping around in the altogether.

Socrates now frowns at the laughter he just imagined. Laughter is no guide to the truth. After all it was only recently that men began exercising naked, when the Spartans and Cretans introduced athletic nudity to the rest of Greece, and when they did the new custom drew plenty of wisecracks from smart alecks. Then people realized that laughter at what looks different does not matter. What matters is that "it is better this way," so Greek men stripped to exercise. In the new city the women will do the same. Male athletic nudity remains laughable "to many among the barbarians," who must not have considered its benefits.⁴⁶

Socrates uses the word *asteioi* for those wags who made fun of men's athletic nudity. An *asteios* person is clever or witty, but literally someone from the *astu* "city," therefore urbane. Their laughter reinforces the distinction between behavior approved in the city and what is outré. They do not dress so here.

Athenian legend held that their hero Theseus first appeared in Athens in outdated clothing: a long *chitôn* down to his feet, as only women still wore, and his hair in a braid. He had grown up in a village ignorant of changing ways, and some men mocked him when he came to Athens. "What maiden of marrying age was wandering around alone?" Dressed wrongly and greeted with jeers, Theseus proves by mythic logic that he does not belong in Athens but comes from elsewhere to civilize it. Athenians who read the *Republic* and heard about their ancestors' laughing at (so to speak) naked Spartans at the gates, would recall their further-back ancestors' laughing at the original civilizing outsider also (already) not wearing Athenian clothes.

Soon the *Republic* will visualize a grimmer laugh. It is the laugh that echoes around the allegorical cave when the escapee representing the philosopher comes back down into the world of shadows and meets with ridicule. He can no longer join in the locals' disputes over shadow patterns on the cave wall. It is important to observe that this escapee has returned not only as a stranger, but alone. The prisoners are a multitude and even constitute a society, distributing "honors and praises" to those who are best at describing the shadows. They *diamillasthai* "contend, dispute" over which shadow will appear next. We can't help adding, "dispute over which shadow will be *in* next year," because their collective attachment to a trivial status quo, and this jeering at those who don't share the same attachment, is the social energy that is commonly said to sustain people's interest in fashion. ⁴⁸ For his part Plato would take an unamused satisfaction in learning that what is fashionable is called "what is in" – how suitably he would take that phrase to fit what belongs in the cave's interior.

If laughter and shaming are a substantive part of a fashion response, then what Socrates says next about the arrival of nudity in Athens must count as a rejection of fashion. They laughed like cave dwellers when men first stripped in the gymnasium and now no one laughs. But Socrates does *not* say, as consistent fashion thinking might compel you to: "People got used to male nudity, which proves that people get used to everything, and soon enough wrestling with naked women will feel just as familiar." After all this could be seen as one more cultural visit from the Spartans, their lawgiver Lycurgus having established practices of (young) women's nudity too. ⁴⁹ An appeal to people's changing tastes would acquiesce in the dynamics of fashion.

Socrates challenges those dynamics entirely, invoking an authority separate from popular opinion. For him a higher law is at work. People understood that it was ameinon "better" to undress than tou sugkaluptein panta ta toiauta "to cover and hide all such things," keeping the body under wraps, meaning both that clothes are on it and that it is kept secret. Once people realized that, then to en tois ophthalmois dê geloion "what was funny in the eyes" or ridiculous to sight fell away in the face of tou en tois logois mênuthentos aristou "what was disclosed as best in arguments." Being funny-looking wasn't funny any more. "Only what is bad is truly laughable." The eyes' judgments of what to laugh at were replaced by the voice of reason. Philosophical thinking carried the day against fashion.

Fashion judgments depend on the possibility of laughter at what is strange, followed by a freshly created loyalty when the strange becomes familiar. Plato wants another mechanism to justify the Greeks' acceptance of nudity. Philosophical reasoning must differ from fashion, though not because the human body is being seen; nor – even in this most Platonic of authors – out of any distaste for change. It's not a matter of the body, because the body is being forcibly exposed. As for *change* in dress, Socrates is calling male athletic nudity a beneficial development that the forces of fashion tried to stop, as is the change to female nudity that he advocates. Plato of all people is weighing in against fashion but also in favor of the transformation of costume.

The effect might resemble the emperor's new clothes to the working people who make up most of the good city's population. Plato too wants to see his city's ruler parading naked, only not from motives of mass hypocrisy and thoughtless imitation but because it is better that way. In the Platonic city the outspoken boy who points and laughs will be taught the reason for this new practice and told to keep his mouth shut.

"Better"

What makes nudity better than being dressed? Socrates does not explain what those reasonable grounds are that carried the day against the eyes' inclination to laugh. The eyes deliver unreliable judgments because they are watching popular opinion. What is the alternative?

The most obvious path to an answer ends up in gibberish. I take it that the Republic's passage on nudity partly draws on Thucydides. Plato knew

Thucydides's history as a whole,⁵¹ and he apparently draws on it here, first in crediting the Spartans with athletic nudity, second in claiming the change to have arrived in Athens only in recent years. The first point may well be true, and if true it would have numerous sources. The second claim common to Plato and Thucydides appears to be theirs alone, as well as false. Visual evidence places nude training and competition well before the later fifth century.⁵² Plato must have taken his chronology from Thucydides – and accepted it gladly no doubt, because having a change like that occur so recently reminds everyone that more changes are possible. The reformer takes heart. Specifically, too, Socrates can claim to explain to Glaucon and Adeimantus what the Athenians thought when they adopted the new practice. The fiction of a recent change lets him purport to know the mechanisms of such change. So Socrates pretends to remind Glaucon and Adeimantus what happened when nudity arrived in Athens, with the implication that female nudity can catch on under the new regime according to the same logic.

Finally Plato seems to follow Thucydides in interpreting athletic nudity as the outfit signifying citizens' equality. Thucydides links the Spartans' nudity to their earlier accomplishment of plain dress, the first sign of equality among them. Plato honors this idea of peerage equality in Sparta and promises a uniformity among his guardians that outdoes the Spartans'. In the new city, guardians will own no money or property, and will not know their parents' identities. Gender equality finishes the project, producing a complete and self-perpetuating class of warriors and rulers.

But with this last reform the *telos* of equality turns into a philosophical joke – and not the friendly intentional kind of joke either but something more like a joke at philosophy's expense. Gender equality can no longer dress as the old equality did. Nudity at the gymnasium had set aside the accourrements of social status – fabric, design – so that only native talent and physical conditioning will differentiate bodies. And it may be fair to say Plato wants to treat gender difference as a social marker, or close to it. One peculiar argument equates the difference between men and women with the difference between a bald cobbler and one with a full head of hair. ⁵³

But of all the strategies there are for drawing attention away from sexual difference, the worst must be to make both sexes strip. Ancient testimony even reports that Plato had a female student, Axiothea of Phlius; the testimony also says she went unnoticed at the Academy by attending in male clothing, not naked.⁵⁴

Why dwell on both sexes' nudity at the gymnasium, in a passage about gender equality and in a tradition of nudity as sign of equality, when this reform would only bring sexual difference to the fore? (Hence the appearance of a joke at philosophy's expense.) The argument bespeaks an overriding commitment to *visibility*, one that might even cause more logical trouble than the plan to equate the sexes by stripping them.

Socrates contrasts gymnasium nudity with *sugkaluptein* "covering, concealing" the exercising body. What is better about the nudity that Athenians already

accepted is its candor. The *Republic*'s revolutionary new city insists on openness, representing it in different ways. The guardians live in public view and send their children to battlefields to see how wars are fought. The unseen implies injustice and perversion, as when we are told about the invisibility of the naked man who had hidden himself in a bronze horse (for implicitly sexual purposes). What the rulers hide in the good city are the births resulting from illicit matings. ⁵⁵

And here is the problem. At the same time that sight prompts the city to expose its guardians' bodies, vision is the obstacle to this new policy. Cleverness loves to visualize, as Aristotle will also say (but without reproach), when addressing ta asteia "what is clever, witty"; effective statements, he advises, must set things pro ommatôn "before the eyes." Socrates taking a contrary position insists that "what is laughable in the eyes [en tois ophthalmois]" has to be set aside in accepting Spartan nudity. It ephanê "appeared," Socrates says, that it was better to disrobe. But this appearance, the beneficent appearing, comes to the mind rather than to the eyes. The women guardians will put on aretê "virtue" not a himation, and virtue is perceived in the soul. It is bootless trying to raise a laugh with reference to any other opsin "sight, spectacle" besides the sight of the aphrôn "what is silly, foolish," a category that evidently includes the folly of remaining dressed during exercise. 57

The general form of this ambiguity occurs in the *Republic*'s metaphysics, for which sight and light represent the best sort of knowledge while simultaneously exemplifying sense perception as a whole in its untrue and corrupting aspects. Your sight is like intellection in its comprehensive embrace of all its objects, and yet it keeps company with those other senses and shares in their bodily distortions of all objects. It shares characteristics with thought that invite comparison between them; it is adjacent to touch and the other senses. Thus vision is a metaphor for philosophical knowledge and a metonym for the senses. Socrates compares the good to the sun and the soul to the eye. But he also separates philosophers from "view-lovers" or lovers of sights, and the intelligible realm (not from what is physical or bodily but) from "the visible." ⁵⁸

The unseen alternates in meaning as sight does. Where vision shares traits with knowledge, what cannot be seen is false and vicious. But the unseen is true, (the) good, and soul-like when vision is taken metonymically as one of the senses. The *Republic*'s argument normally balances these two conceptions of the visual, taking care to mark where one conception rather than the other is at work. The defense of women's exercise verges on contradiction by making vision play both parts at once, lord among the senses and rebel against reason.

Whatever it does to the argument in this passage, the double vision that rejects and accepts athletic nudity encourages me in thinking that Plato is responding to fashion sentiments. When Socrates acknowledges public ridicule regarding ways of dress, he is describing a perpetual force behind sartorial fashion. But when he defeats those mocking looks by appeal to another breed of look, so that looks matter to dress after all – another *way* of looking mind you, generating another *kind* of dress – to my mind this settles the question. Socrates shows himself to be opposing fashion by enacting the strategy reviewed in Chapter 5 under the name of anti-fashion.

Anti-fashion presents itself as paradox, taking its place among fashions in dress but also announcing as it does so that it transcends fashion. The shaved head is something one does with hair and yet is not just another haircut. Black is a color as opposed to a texture or sound, but it is also something other than color. The fitting-in or finding-a-place you may call a horizontal justification for anti-fashion, while it also justifies itself vertically, as fashions do not, possessing grounds or proof of its value. The eye for which no sight is laughable except folly – the eye that is not an eye at all; what Socrates calls the eye of the soul⁵⁹ – is the knowing connoisseur's eye that approves of nudity that the other eyes laugh at.

For Plato the anti-fashion arrives in Athens as one more spectacle among the rest and vulnerable to the same unknowing stares that laughed at Socrates on the comic stage and sentenced him to death. When they laugh, those eyes resemble their close associates the other senses. Athenians did not want to hear much of Socrates any more than look at him. But the nudity that came to Athens respects those eyes in another capacity, as images of the knowing soul. It is better by virtue of making more access available to the knowledge-seeking eyes. It reminds the eyes that they command other ways of learning. It is the lordly way of dress, suited to those who prove their worth as the city's lords by desiring knowledge above all, even making it their primary object of desire.⁶⁰

Notes

- 1 Pl. *Phd*. 64d–e.
- 2 Thus Ashwell and Langton 2011: 135.
- 3 Plut. Sol.: limits on funerals, 12; meeting with Croesus, 27. The report of this meeting is partly corroborated by Herod. 1.29–33, but that may be only because Herodotus is Plutarch's source for that meeting.
- 4 Aesch. Supp. 234-237; Gruen 2011: 231.
- 5 Pl. Rep. 8.557c; cited as relevant to Plato's assessment of fashion by La Caze (2011: 201).
- 6 Hollander 1993: 17, 90. For a typical account see Nunn 2000: 13. Lipovetsky subscribes to a strong version of this historical claim (Lipovetsky 1994: 15, 19–20, 35, 46).
- 7 Lipovetsky 1994: 55-87.
- 8 Holladay 1978, Gruen 2011: 28.
- 9 Contrast Genesis 3 with Protagoras's birth-of-morality story that he tells in Pl. Prt. 320c-322d. In both places human beings start out naked and amoral, and both times they end up living in civilization and clothed. The clothing comes roughly when the sense of shame does, on both accounts. For this and other such comparisons see Derrida 2008. The comparison comes to an end. In Protagoras's version of the story people work out how to make their own shoes and clothing and then receive the gifts from Zeus of justice and aidôs "shame." Even when moral sentiments come from the gods clothing is, as it were, optional.
- 10 Aesch. Pers. 181–196; "one wearing Persian dress [peploisi Persikois], the other in Dorian [Dôrikoisin]," 182–183.
- Attic Greek is not exactly Ionian Greek despite their similarities. And it may be that Athenian appeals to pan-Ionian sentiment reflected political expediency more than they did either a true Ionian identity with Athenians or even a genuine belief in such identity; on this see Connor 1993.

- 12 Aesch. *Pers.*: "Ionian land," 178; messenger on Salamis, 282–290, 353–471; mentions of Athens, 285, 286.
- 13 Greek images of barbarians, Rosivach 1999. In *Pers.* in particular, see 255 at which the Persian herald laments the loss of their troops: *stratos gar pas olôle barbarôn* "the entire army of the barbarians is destroyed" presumably not the way one referred to one's fellow soldiers.
- 14 Some readings of the *Persians* see the play as blatant patriotic triumphalism. But its evasion of such simple-mindedness does not affect the point at hand, that Aeschylus thinks in Greek categories even when trying to imagine Persian characters.
- 15 Thus Eur. Alc. 675-676; Ar. Birds 762. Rosivach 1999: 129.
- 16 Herod.: Babylonian tunics and slippers, 1.195; Egyptian priests of papyrus, 2.37.
- 17 Herod.: Egyptians urinate, 2.35; Lydians ashamed of nudity, 1.10.
- 18 Gruen (2011) has pressed the case against ethnocentrism by Greeks in antiquity really, pressed the point as far as one could. More often than not his arguments fail to convince, but he makes the point that easy generalizations about racism and ethnic bias in antiquity cannot be taken for granted as they have been.
- 19 Herod.: Persians adopting Medes' clothing, 1.135; Croesus advises Cyrus, 1.150.
- Bonfante (2003) is not hesitant about imputing a fashion sensibility to the Etruscans. She speaks of "the perizoma fashion" in Etruria (29), and (speaking of the middle of the sixth century) "an exhilarating variety of forms and fashions and changes as rapid as those of fashion styles today" (48). Foreign influence is the force behind these fashions (29, 92).
- 21 Herod.: Persian muster, 7.61–99; soft felt hats, 7.61; pointed hats, 7.64; headgear feathers, 7.92.
- Herod.: Persians in *anaxuridas* therefore hard to defeat, 1.71.2; in *anaxuridas* therefore easy to beat, 5.49.3–4.
- 23 Miller 1992: presence of parasols in Athens, 91–92; their use by women, 102. The parasol is familiar to Athenian audiences at least by Ar. *Birds* 1504, 1550.
- A law of 397 would threaten anyone who wore pants in Rome with exile and the confiscation of all property; similar laws followed in the early fifth century, Grant 1990: 137.
- Herod.: Scylas in Greek clothes, 4.78–80; Greeks outfit statues with Libyan clothes, 4.189.
- 26 Herod. 2.4.2, 2.50.1.
- 27 Herod. 5.87.
- 28 Herod. 5.87.3. The word that Herodotus uses, *kithôn*, seems to be his dialect's way of saying *chitôn*. This was a simple sheet-like robe worn by both sexes. What matters to the story is that the new garment was made of linen and sewn together rather than pinned.
- 29 Eur. Hec. 1169–1171. This last example might show less than it means to. The date of Hecuba and the popularity of Herodotus among Athenian intellectuals make it possible that Euripides wrote his tragedy after reading the Histories. But if Euripides takes his story from some part of the Trojan myth, that older story could be the source for both his play and the story in Herodotus.
- 30 Marcus 1994.
- 31 Herod. 5.92.7.
- 32 See Lateiner 1989: 78–82, already cited, on Herodotus's different formulae for weakening a story he tells. Herodotus argues at length against some points; sometimes observes that a story is hard to believe; sometimes, minimally, puts a story into an unnamed third party's mouth. "Some say," etc. He cultivates an art of withholding assent.
- 33 The *Suda* (entry: Polyasis) identifies Herodotus's father as Lyxes. This would be the Greek spelling of a Carian name, making Herodotus half-Carian. However, this identification dates only as far back as the tenth-century Byzantine Empire and of unknown provenance before then.

- 34 Thuc. 1.10.3–5.
- 35 Thuc.: open warfare, 1.4–5; "being armed," 1.6.1; all men, 1.6.2.
- 36 Thuc. 1.6.3. Perhaps because the grasshopper was thought to generate spontaneously out of the earth, it symbolized the autochthonous Athenians. And a little as men's hats did in the US in the 1970s, these pins must have persisted in the fifth century as old-man wear. (See Ar. Eq. 1331, at which the resurrected Demos is tettigophoras "wearing grasshoppers [i.e. in his hair].") Indeed it is striking that as the wane of the men's hat in America coincided with the waxing of jeans, so too in Athens the clothing signifying class distinction was replaced by a commoner way of dress. The "not much time ago" is one of the specific markers in this chapter of Thucydides that makes headaches for historians trying to pin down just when each stage took place, especially when nudity came to Athens. On that question, which will come up again, see McDonnell 1991.
- 37 Thuc.: Spartans changed dress, 1.6.4; loincloths in the old days, 1.6.5.
- 38 Thuc.: barbarians still gird themselves, 1.6.5; "many other old Greek practices," 1.6.6.
- 39 See Lee 2004; also Pl. Euthphr. 6c and Rosenstock 1994 on the peplos used in the Panathenaea.
- 40 See feminist critiques of modern dress. You can't run or fight in traditional ladies' clothes.
- 41 Pl. Hip. min. 368b—c. Considering how unsympathetically Plato depicts Hippias, this is in all likelihood not an invention but given in the spirit of concession.
- 42 On Hippodamus, Arist. *Pol.* 2.8 1267b23–29. On notable biographical data turning up in Aristotle's corpus, see Momigliano 1971: 68–70.
- 43 Svendsen 2006: 17. The reference is to Pl. Hip. mai. 294a-b.
- 44 Pl.: Laws 2.656e, Rep. 4.424b.
- 45 Pl. Rep. 5.452a-e.
- 46 Pl. Rep. 5.452c.
- 47 Paus. 1.19.1. Although Pausanias is a late source, the archaic poet Bacchylides already spoke of Theseus in striking dress, in this case a purple *chitôn*. Bacchyl. 18, ll. 53–54. See Davie 1982: 26.
- 48 Pl. Rep. 7: philosopher comes back into cave, 517a; no longer joins in disputes over shadows, 517a; "honors and praises," 516c–d; "contend, dispute" over shadows, 516e.
- 49 Plut. *Lyc*.14.2, 14.4, 15.1.
- 50 Pl. Rep. 5.452d.
- Plato's *Menexenus* makes clear that Plato was familiar not only with the Periclean funeral speech reported in Thucydides but with the entire chronicle of the Peloponnesian War, a chronicle that Plato's funeral speech takes it upon itself to rewrite: Pappas and Zelcer 2013.
- Thuc. 1.6.5. McDonnell 1991 is a definitive treatment of Thucydides and Plato on the arrival date of athletic nudity. McDonnell treats both the question of whether nudity could have appeared as late as they say (no, is his answer) and the question of why Thucydides should ever have asserted such a thing. McDonnell considers it clear that Plato's error derives from the mistake in Thucydides. Some historians of Greek sports (e.g. Scanlon 2002) argue that athletic nudity did not become established until as late as 650. But that date is still more than 200 years before Socrates is putatively speaking.
- 53 Pl. Rep. 5.454c.
- 54 Axiothea: dressed as man, Diog. Laert. 3.46; attended Plato's lectures without gender being noticed, Them. 295e.
- Pl. Rep.: guardians always under examination, 3.412e, 3.413c; live in camp visible to all, 3.416d; watch battles when young, 5.466e, 5.467e; invisibility in story of ring, 2.359c–360b; within that story, image of the naked and presumably depraved man's corpse, 2.359d–e; children born to unapproved mating disposed of secretly, 5.460c.

- 56 Arist. Rh.: ta asteia, 3.10 1410b6; setting things before the eyes, 3.10 1410b33–35; and see 3.11 on just how thoughts may be set before eyes.
- 57 Pl. Rep.5: it appeared, 452d-e; women will put on virtue, 457a.
- 58 Pl. Rep.: vision the most sun-like sense, 6.508b; philosophers distinguished from philotheamones "view-lovers" in that they are view-lovers regarding truth, 5.475d—e; noêton "intelligible" versus horaton "visible" domains, 6.509d.
- 59 Pl. Rep. 7.518c.
- 60 Pl. Rep. 5.475b.

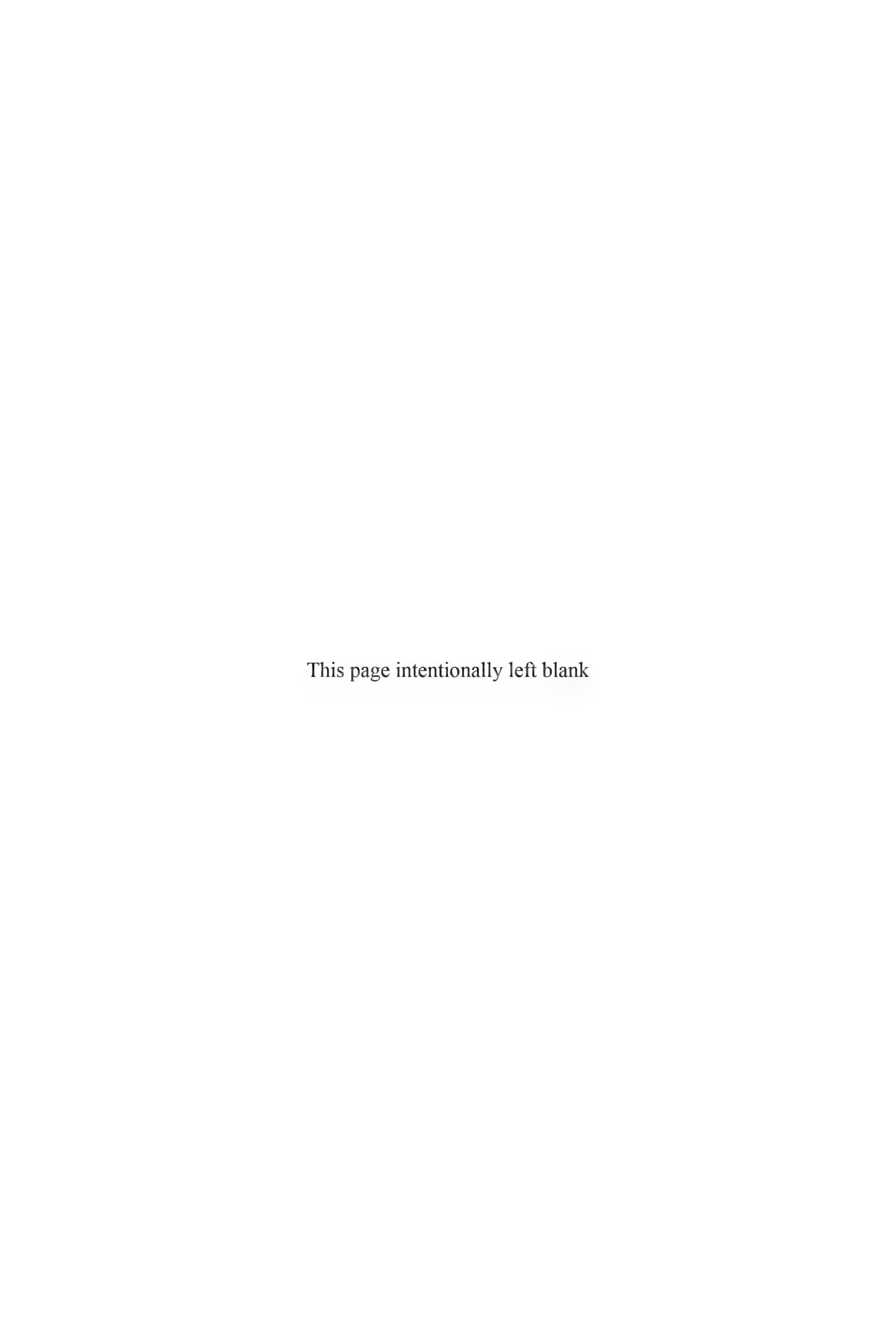
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176 Philosophy regarding fashion

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Part III The philosopher's new clothes



7 There is no outfit like Greek nudity

In 2013, a case came to court in northern California about San Francisco's public-nudity laws, which permitted nudity in some places but not all – not on public streets, in parks, or on public transportation. The plaintiffs in *Hightower v. San Francisco* complained that as a result of those restrictions they "will suffer an improper chilling of their First Amendment rights," as more than one of those plaintiffs "uses nudity as part of his political expression." 1

Edward Chen, the judge, denied that nudity is a matter of expression. "Unlike the burning of a flag ..., burning of a draft card ..., or wearing a black armband in protest against the war ..., public nudity in and of itself is not commonly associated with expression of a particular message."²

Along with other precedents, Judge Chen drew on a US Supreme Court decision in City of Erie v. Pap's A.M., a case pitting the public-nudity laws of Erie, Pennsylvania, against a bar in that town, Kandyland, that featured nude dancing. The Court's decision in March 2000 acknowledged that the dancing at Kandyland carried a message (an erotic message) that nudity by itself did not, but that the message was not much distorted or silenced when the dancers wore tiny coverings. Writing for the four-vote plurality, Sandra Day O'Connor wrote:

Even if Erie's public nudity ban has some minimal effect on the erotic message by muting that portion of the expression that occurs when the last stitch is dropped, the dancers at Kandyland and other such establishments are free to perform wearing pasties and G-strings. Any effect on the overall expression is *de minimis*.³

The *Pap's A.M.* decision leads us toward an overwhelming problem that faces First Amendment arguments for nudity. The body may arouse interest or offend morals, but in our time there is no clear sense that it says something or what it could communicate. If you interpret "significance" broadly enough, it is reasonable to say that just as the right uniforms signify police and army, the naked body – but especially a woman's – delivers what the Court calls an erotic message. Drivers who see a neon roadside sign that is the outline of a woman's naked form will rightly assume that the business is oriented toward sex.

But just as a regular red octagon that communicates an unmistakable "Stop" to us would have said no such thing to Plato, it may be that the undressed body – and especially the young male body – bore meanings in Greek antiquity that it no longer carries. Does the sexual significance that the naked body has today drown out its other meanings? – which would suggest that a naked body did not so obviously imply sexual relations in antiquity, or not so overwhelmingly, given that the body was able to mean other things too. Or do we prefer to say that, even if we can set aside the sexual meanings of a naked body, the connotations that body now carries are still so different from those experienced in Athenian gymnasia as to give us a different naked body?

There is a certain melancholy in saying that even looking at the bare human has changed from Plato's time to ours, in that the possibility reduces still further our hopes for understanding antiquity. But if these obstacles to understanding do exist, identifying them is the first step to overcoming them.

The descendants of Adam and Eve might emphasize the childlike happiness of their forebears' nudity, as opposed to, say, the coarseness that primitive unclothed humans shared with the non-human animals that wear no clothes. The children of William Harvey and other modern anatomists have reasons to see the frankly presented body as factuality, that which is there before them, as opposed to what benighted theories might tell them ought to be there. But after early childhood the naked body no longer speaks to us of blessed innocence, and non-scientists are not likely to see it as fact finally arrived at. Even so, those meanings are to some degree available to the body's modern observers. They probably would not have been ancient Greek associations; and we may well expect the ancient Greeks, the only culture to glorify the human form as they did, to see meanings in it that moderns do not.

The argument of this book thus far calls for some discussion of the meanings in question. The two chapters before this one both arrived at references to human nudity at the ends of their argumentative paths. In Chapter 5 the dominant examples of anti-fashion turned out to derive their justification from their relationships to the undressed body. Chapter 6, seeking something in classical Greece that resembles modern talk of fashion, came to Socrates in the *Republic* contrasting fashion reactions with the "better" practice that is athletic nudity. The purpose of this chapter is to sort through Greek accounts of their own nudity, moving toward the practices that Plato would have seen as given, and understanding what it would have meant (to Plato) that he proposed the undressed form as the philosopher's mode of self-presentation.

With these inquiries the separate lines of argument in this book will start converging, for the very reason that the two preceding chapters both ended in the same place. If Plato's idea of justifiable dress for the philosopher (understood as one human type among others and yet as the generally human potential made actual) comes to the same point that anti-fashion does, there may be good reason to see the philosopher's presentation in the world as anti-fashionist.

For starters, notice that the kinds of nudity that Chapters 5 and 6 arrived at contrast with the image that comes from the story of the emperor's new

clothes. The emperor's undress is a shameful state that does not recognize its own shamefulness. His obliviousness is not even the innocence that naked animals have about themselves, or humans as we might imagine them in early stages of pre-civilization. Instead the emperor's canniness has let him be led into the exposure that a much earlier man accepted about himself guilelessly and without comment. Sophistication made the emperor guileless. His too-shrewd theatricalization of himself is the form of presentation that anti-fashions have opposed themselves to, and that the nudity of the *Republic*'s rulers rejects whether the guardians are exercising or not. The lives of those rulers neither lend themselves to theater nor allow for conversation with foreign consultants. When the guardians walk through the good city naked, they will be undressed completely differently from the empirically indiscernible emperor. Everything is visible but nothing is a performance.

Is that another contradiction, treating two naked kings in opposite ways? I suspect that insisting it must be a contradiction, and rejecting out of hand the differences between one naked man or woman and another, requires assuming that (no matter what meanings clothing may carry) the unclothed condition means nothing – which is to say, that it always means the same single thing. We may well be living in a time when such an assumption is true. Today Judge Chen probably speaks for most people, who would agree with him that your body is not a black armband.

But if you want to read a Platonic passage like the one in the *Theaetetus* in which Socrates challenges Theodorus to strip as if he were in a Spartan gym; and then the later moment from that dialogue that finds Theodorus correcting the simile, the unitary understanding of nudity will not suffice. Theaetetus, Theodorus, and Socrates can speak to one another among types of naked human bodies that Plato's readers today need to work to tell apart.

Nudity in modern Europe

The difficulty begins with Adam and Eve, on whom clothing carries multiple and shifting meanings, its absence not. When the first humans acquire knowledge of good and evil, their genitals shame them and they cover themselves up, stitching fig leaves together into what the King James translation calls "aprons." Fig leaves are large coverings shaped like male genitals, which makes them emphasize the sexual nature of the nakedness being denied. Their shape implies the futility of this first human effort at clothing, if the fig leaf emphasizes what it is supposed to be denying, like a clumsy effort at crossing out a word that only succeeds at underlining it. More wisely the fig leaf's shape is a reminder that acts of covering have a habit of pointing out what they would like to erase.

What fig leaves draw other people's eyes to, they also alert the apron wearer's skin to. As the Bible's readers have realized for millennia, fig leaves irritate human skin. Saint Irenaeus suggested that Adam and Eve put the scratchy leaves on in deliberate self-mortification, to torment those members that were

specially connected with the Fall.⁵ For him, and perhaps generally, the penitent act is torn between wishing a sin never to have existed and re-enacting it; and subsequent acts of dressing have repeated the penitents' compulsiveness. If human clothing has above all hidden the markers of gender, even done that when it does nothing else, it also takes pains to differentiate the genders for which the telltale genitals are no longer available as signs.

Luckily the first couple do not have to wear their fig leaves very long. After expelling them from Eden, God pityingly sews them new clothes out of animal skins. Leather is supple and durable where leaves are impractical, implying God's loving mercy even amid human depravity. Or is the point that something had to be killed? The animal skins are the first reference to death in Genesis, soon to be followed by Abel's animal sacrifice, which is then echoed by his own death. What humans wear now reminds them of their own coming ends. (Adam and Eve interpreted their own increased knowledge sexually. God reminds them that sexuality is only one symptom of the newly mortal condition that people are now in.)

For humans living after the Fall, the nakedness that negates their now-clothed state carries a single meaning. Humans after the Fall are the only ones who hear this story. Once they gained knowledge they can't lose it. (Although having your eyes opened is a good metaphor for coming to know, there is no reversal that resembles shutting the eyes.) So no one who hears of the Fall will be able to experience human nakedness as morally empty; it is and will remain a shameful condition. Indeed the story about nakedness that comes later in Genesis, of Noah asleep in his vineyard, presupposes the shamefulness of his undress without having to explain it. This is why Genesis begins by saying the man and woman were naked "and they were not ashamed," to correct what every audience would assume.⁷

If humans are now wearing animal skins, it must follow that the animals are no longer wearing them. Clothing made of animal skins reminds us that a man undressed is now something like an animal flayed, being hopeless and vulnerable and on the point of extermination. Undress after the Fall bespeaks a weakened, shamed condition.

The vision of the naked body in Genesis may explain modern responses that likewise treat that body as unambiguous, not even needing to be "seen as" something. Open your eyes and you too will see what nakedness signifies – even when it signifies something commendable. Clothing stands in need of interpretation, but a body does not send conflicting signals as fig leaves and animal skins do.

François Jullien's book *The Impossible Nude* has made it easier to encapsulate modern Western uses of nudity. Jullien comes to art's nudes from his study of China, in whose tradition the nude appears exceptionally and with unsavory associations. Turning from China back to Europe he tries to understand the conditions for the possibility of the nude from a perspective according to which the nude was impossible. He finds philosophical significance in Europe's naked body. "Through the nude," Jullien writes, "man' has rediscovered an essence

and become timeless. Whence European culture's continued attachment to the nude: European art was fixated on the nude, just as its philosophy was fixated on the true."

The nude and the true are more closely connected than analogy alone, as expressions like "naked truth" already insinuate. Nudes in art both generate and are caused by philosophical concerns, forcing the question "What is man *in his generality*?" China, possessing as it does "a wisdom but not a philosophy," never asks such a question. The nude resists social and ethnic classification, but Chinese art aims at observing exactly those classifications. Here, in an elaboration of the truth represented in Western art's nudity, the nude becomes "egalitarian ... atemporal"; it "freezes man in time ... serves as a concept of man." This is what you would expect from a nudity that implies truth; and one suspects that Jullien's belief about what nudity must mean to philosophers has led him at least part of the way to these interpretations of European art. 12

Descartes takes the metaphor to its extreme application when he imagines his lump of wax as a thing distinguished from its color, shape, scent, and other perceivable properties. Summarizing his investigation in paragraph 14 of the Second Meditation he says it is as if he "had taken off [the wax's] clothes [tanquam vestibus detractis]" and now considers it nudam "naked." Undressing the wax leads to the truth about it that only human rationality can discover, even though any animal could have perceived those sensory qualities that enrobed the wax. "In other words," Jullien writes, "the being can only be attained if it is naked." ¹⁴

Other modern uses of the metaphor keep nakedness in the human domain but resemble the Cartesian passage in opposing unveiled truth to the protective illusion fostered by clothing. The illusion derives from organized society and the weight of its history; once undressed, a man is seen in his reality both solitary and animal. "Thou art the thing itself," Lear says in the storm. "Unaccommodated man" – the man not adorned with dress – "is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal." Marshall Berman shows how the nakedness in Shakespeare carries a double effect that later writers reduce to either promise alone or fear alone. Thus on one side Montesquieu and Rousseau equate dress with the repressiveness exercised by past society, Montesquieu in his condemnation of Persian women's veils and Rousseau with a Greek-inspired image already noted: "The good man is an athlete who likes to fight naked [nu]." Against the French philosophes, Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France sees loss plain and simple in the French Revolution's gleeful ecdysiasm, an act that will leave only "our weak and shivering nature."

But the opposition between French and English begins with a reading of the naked human that both sides share. The naked human is that natural, often animal object that has come to dress itself in the costume of custom.

These modern interpretations of nudity reinforce Jullien's claim that modern European thought equates the unclothed with the essential and true. As a description of modern art, however, his claim is more open to counter-examples. Anne Hollander, for one, has argued that nudes in modern paintings speak of clothing as much as omit it, even (as if they wore fig leaves) in the act

of omitting it. Whether because the clothing of a given time comes to mold the bodies of artists' models, or more likely because artists of every century look at undressed models guided by the expectations that contemporary wardrobes produce in them (the waist there; breasts to be propped up), the nudes in modern paintings reflect the shapes of these same bodies when they are clothed. European art nudes do not necessarily communicate an egalitarian essence of the human or free human beings in time independent of fashion and custom. Perhaps they were never intended to.

Jullien can be forgiven for treating the nudes in modern art as exemplars of the attitude toward nudity latent in modern thinkers' metaphors. He may even be justified, not merely excused, in reading art nudes as a Rousseau or Descartes reads the good man and the lump of wax. As in other books, Jullien returns to the West in *The Impossible Nude* as if coming upon it freshly, his study of China leading him to the idiosyncrasy in a culture that might not notice its own idiosyncratic tendencies. That is all to the good. Anthropology may not begin at home but it ought to pay a trip back there occasionally, if only to realize how unfamiliar home is.

But while Jullien excels at seeing the West as a peculiar culture relative to the world, he misses the peculiarity of ancient Greece relative to the West today. This uniformization of Western culture follows from the externalized viewpoint as much as the act of rendering it peculiar does. What nakedness means to Descartes it must have also meant (his book appears to argue) to Plotinus and before him to Plato and on backwards through to Homer. By external standards the West shows its differences; internally it is the same and remains the same.

Nudity for non-Greeks

Two remarks in later non-Greek sources, without being about nudity, suggest how Greece's neighboring cultures perceived its displays of the (male) body.

The actual subject in both sources is circumcision, which Herodotus had observed among the Egyptians nearly exclusively, remarking that "they would rather be clean than more attractive." For the Jews of antiquity circumcision was divine mandate. They attributed its origin to Abraham rather than to Moses, with whom most dietary regimens and other regulations begin, to indicate that this is not merely a rule prescribed to existing Jews but one that helps to define the male Jew who will receive later rules. By reason of its priority in time and its physical closeness, not to mention its visibility, circumcision comes to work as an emblem for Hebrew law as such.²¹

Within the Judaism of late antiquity, circumcision becomes a portable sign of the commandments. As a story says in *Sifré to Deuteronomy* 36,²² a man's circumcision therefore preserves him from ever being fully undressed. "When [David] went into the bathhouse and saw himself naked, he said 'Woe to me, I am naked of commandments,' but then he saw his mark of circumcision and began to praise it,"²³ so he was not naked after all. Circumcision is a kind of clothing.²⁴

For Roman surgeons, circumcision posed the practical challenge of reversing what could be considered a mutilation. Celsus addresses the task in *De Medicina*, a compilation of Roman medical practices apparently written during the first century of the Empire. The surgeon needs to bring the foreskin forward, whether to undo the circumcision practiced by some nations or (in the easier case) to compensate for a natural deficiency of foreskin. Celsus introduces both conditions with the phrase *si glans nuda est* "if the glans is naked."²⁵

It is clear enough that David should want to celebrate circumcision, and sources besides Celsus attest to its undesirability to Romans – thus a comment by Trimalchio in the *Satyricon*, to mention only one.²⁶ At the same time, however, and more surprisingly, both texts reflect agreement about nakedness as a state of deprivation. For Celsus the circumcised *glans* is *nuda* "naked" because infelicitously deprived of its sheath or cloak. For David an uncircumcised penis would be the naked one, deprived of the law that cloaks the pious. If you approve of circumcision you think it solves the problem of undress, and if you disapprove you think it reiterates that problem.

That the Romans and Jews should both identify the undesired state as the naked one squares with the initial reactions by both nations to Greek gymnasium culture. Greeks entered Judaea as colonizers, whereas in Rome they were the subjugated, but both places found Greek naked athleticism objectionable.

Whether or not Judaism objects to nudity as such, an assessment that is sometimes offered too glibly,²⁷ the arrival of naked Greek athletes in Jerusalem was treated as a problem. The building of a gymnasium next to the Temple is condemned in 2 Maccabees.²⁸ Without mentioning exercise areas specifically, Jubilees instructs the Jews not to follow foreigners' lead, lest they be uncovered in the way gentiles were accustomed to being.²⁹

It is a commonplace to say that the Romans conquered the Greeks but subsequently absorbed their intellectual achievements and emulated their arts. While the general cultural influence did follow such a narrative, there were also exceptions to it: first of all the old-fashioned citizens of the Republic who resented foreign new ways of any kind, but also the uneven progress of the influence. By the time that Celsus was proposing remedial surgery for the denuded glans the Romans must have been adjusting to athletic nudity. (Why the interest in reversing circumcision, if not the growing acceptance of naked gymnasia where circumcision could be seen?³⁰) Yet Cicero in the preceding generation blamed the Greeks' unrestrained pederasty on their gymnasia, despite his evident admiration for their culture, and he approvingly quoted Ennius on the disgrace of citizens' bodies being undressed in front of other citizens. Cicero took Mark Antony to task for having participated almost naked in the religious festival the Lupercalia.³¹ Pliny called the Greeks the progenitors of all vices, specifically for their liberal oil-rubbing in the gym. And a century after Celsus, Plutarch still equated Greek gymnasia with idleness and uncontrolled pederasty.³² Before them all Cato the Elder set the contrasting example of Roman morality when he refused to bathe even with his son.³³

Other evidence about foreign perceptions of Greek nudity comes from the Greeks themselves, and one should not accept all the claims to uniqueness that a culture makes about itself. Nevertheless the sources speak unanimously. Herodotus, opening his *Histories* with Lydia's King Candaules who showed his wife off naked to an adviser, emphasizes how appalling this behavior would have been, even worse than it strikes a Greek. Among the Lydians "and among almost all the other barbarians," it is shameful for even men to be seen naked. ³⁴ Plato's character Pausanias speaks of all "barbarians" as forbidding naked athletics. ³⁵

In another kind of observation about non-Greek responses to nudity, Athenian manufacturers of vases for export seem to have censored the images they sold to the Etruscans. Etruria imported Athenian pottery, but Etruscan art tended not to display naked bodies. So a number of Athenian vases (known as the "Perizoma Group") apparently drawn in the first place to show leaping young men with penes exposed, had been touched up with loincloths, to all appearances in deference to Etruscan sensibilities.³⁶

The singularity of Greece does not nullify François Jullien's generalizations about the nude in Western art and thought. His conclusions are truer than most such pronouncements are, no doubt because his familiarity with China stops him from taking the West's way as the only way possible. His generalizations fail, when they do, by virtue of assimilating a foreign ancient culture to later cultures that claim that ancient one as their own. When it declares itself the heir to Greece, the modern West narrows down what Greek nudity can mean — which encourages Jullien to find in Descartes more or less what he would find in Plato. "We are the heirs to antiquity" is not only a pompous claim, it enhances or imagines similarities where they do not exist, between the living and their putative ancestors.

I seemed to be arguing to the opposite point in the previous chapter, where I said that Greek thought contained images of fashion and of the resistance to fashion. There antiquity was made to look more like modernity; here, less like it. But while either of the two claims might be false, they are not being made on ad hoc grounds. As a matter of fact the likeness in one case calls for the unlikeness in the other. If the Greeks did experience some phenomenon that was like a fashion phenomenon, and athletic nudity played a part in their version of fashion discourse, then nudity had to have possessed ranges of meaning that have since become unavailable. Their resembling us in speaking of fashion implies our failure to resemble them in readings of nudity. For what we call being naked today does not enter into what we call talk of fashion. There seems to be less one can mean by nakedness today.

Recent treatments of Greek nudity

Since its appearance close to thirty years ago, Larissa Bonfante's article "Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art" has inspired a level of attention to both nudity in Greek art, and nudity among flesh-and-blood Greeks, that the phenomenon had not previously received.³⁷

One point that emerges from Bonfante's analysis is that Greek nudity is not an art phenomenon. If she had wanted to treat *kouros* sculptures and vase paintings solely under the aegis of art history, then her claims to the uniqueness of nudity in Greece would be legitimately challenged by the evidence that Nancy Serwint brings to bear. Serwint observes that other eastern Mediterranean cultures depicted human nudes too, those often enough being women (as the Greeks did not do until Hellenistic statuary), and indeed women with their sexualities displayed as they rarely were in Greek art.³⁸

But Serwint's objections mistake Bonfante's investigation for an art historical one, the question of when and why Greek sculpture represents the unclothed form. Bonfante's discussion leads in the opposite direction. The Greeks were naked in art for the reason that they were naked in life. In other ancient cultures nudity may well have been an art phenomenon, as it has been in modern Europe. In ancient Greece the nudity existed in life. And for that prevalent nudity in gymnasia and competitions, in initiation rituals, and in performances of Greek pederasty, there is no comparable example.

What holds true of non-Greek humans depicted undressed applies even more to images of gods. Divine nudity is common in Near Eastern portrayals of gods and goddesses. The glimpse that Moses gets of God's back parts might allude to such a portrayal.³⁹ The nudity practiced in Greek cities does not originate in those representations, considering that these images were so available outside Greece although the human practice of nudity was not. Nor do we have any reason to imagine the Greeks' seeking to emulate the appearances of their gods.

The reference to ritual practice, not to mention pederasty, suggests how inadequately Jullien's generality and essence will translate Greek nudity. An initiate will strip, as in a case from Arcadia (discussed below), not because he gets down to his true self in the process but more plausibly because he does not, because the nudity affords him a temporary interim identity. Like a graduation gown it is an unaccustomed outfit that makes him someone else for a while. To compare this to the arrival at human essence is to have been misled by overarching assumptions about philosophy. As Chapter 6 argues, the same must be true of athletic nudity on at least some interpretations, Plato's for instance. To believe that Plato has the city's male and female guardians stripping to exercise for the purpose of rendering them all alike – the generic thinking person – is to make a joke about philosophers' impracticality that even Aristophanes does not attempt.

Greek athleticism as a whole also needs to be recognized as idiosyncratic in many of its features, rather than as continuous with modern sports. As Greek nudity has, its athleticism too has benefited from a flourishing of modern scholarly attention that Plato's readers would do well to look into, and for all those who study antiquity, athletics open up a line of communication between ancients and moderns. But I find it telling that whereas Greek athletic nudity bore some relationship to equality among citizens, sports in modern democracies present the spectacle of aristocracy. More to the point, modern athletics will not say nearly enough to illuminate ancient nudity, given how small a role nudity plays in sports today.

As a first step toward the peculiarity of classical Greece (the period that runs from the age of Pericles to that of Alexander), it is essential to see that if Plato's Greece treats human nudity differently from the modern West, the classical era also differs from the culture that *it* treated as ancestral, the Bronze Age world that Plato and his peers found in the Homeric epics. This point has been made. The beauty, youth, and prowess that the archaic and classical eras would associate with sprinters and *kouros* statues are absent from Homer's mentions of nakedness, as those are found on Thersites and Odysseus. Homer makes more sense to modern readers of these scenes than the later classical authors would. It feels embarrassing to moderns to be naked in public, and as different as Odysseus is from Thersites they both find it embarrassing too.⁴⁰

By the fifth century of Pericles and Thucydides and (a little later) Socrates, the century Plato was born into, the custom of undress had established itself, with athletic nudity standard, as I observed in Chapter 6. Both literary sources and archaeological discoveries (such as vase paintings of naked men sprinting, wrestling, boxing, whirling with a discus) testify to the ubiquity of the practice, whether in formal competitions at "games" or in the workouts preparatory to competition. But Greeks of the time were also accustomed to the naked form in sculpture that lacked athletic significance, most famously the *kouros* statues dating to 600 and earlier. The *kouroi* were portrayed as motionless or nearly so. They had the angled archaic smile on their faces, and one foot came forward from the other a foot length or less in the first archaic step. My point about these familiar features of the *kouroi* is that they were indeed (as perceived) signs of life, but unimaginable as signs of athletic activity.

Bonfante and scholars who follow her ask how the different manifestations of male nudity are related to one another and related to a common cause of both, if any common cause exists. The trail of evidence thins out before 500. If naked athletics and statuary both originated before 600 or even before 700, as some evidence suggests, nothing like a filled-in picture survives of the times and folkways of that birth.

The cultural origin of a custom does not fix its cultural meaning. Take that familiar example the handshake, commonly explained as a warriors' greeting by which two men capable of violence both proved they had no swords in hand. Not only has that use disappeared from modern handshakes, but people now categorize handshakes (the dead fish, the finger squeeze, the two-handed linger grip) on grounds that have nothing to do with swords. The handshake has a general meaning today, and specific handshakes have special meanings, independent of origins.

The story of where handshakes come from is universally known, and not just because handshakes are common in the West. Most Americans see cutlery every day without asking whether the fork or spoon is older. As the most socially acceptable touch, the handshake enters a region of prohibitions and anxieties, which may show why people want to hear an explanation of the practice. (How reassuring that the explanation tells of early weapons-screening, something manly and impersonal. If the handshake had begun as a sexual

caress, people who shake on a deal today might prefer not to know that, and probably would not treat it as a fun fact.) Greeks of the classical time may have long stopped snickering about athletic nudity, but it remained as true for them as it is today that men did not walk naked through the street.

The Hellenistic encyclopedist of philosophy, Diogenes Laertius, even attributes a remark about public-nudity prohibitions to Plato. Plato (says Diogenes) distinguished between written and unwritten laws. Some things go without saying and have their force despite not being said; "for example that one does not go naked into the agora." However unremarkable a *kouros* statue might be, or the sight of two men naked in the wrestling ring, everyone understood that nakedness remained in those places. The taboo (in language attributed to Plato: the unwritten law) is not lifted but suspended, as rules against touching strangers do not dissolve away after the handshake – it is not a gateway touch that leads to more – but only cease for the duration of one handshake and then come into effect again.

Pausanias

Pausanias, writing in Greek in Roman times, rounded up the tales that he heard on his travels through Greece, origin stories among them. Why did Greeks begin competing nude in the Olympics? Because, Pausanias says, one day during the fifteenth celebration of the Games, a man from Megara named Orsippus was running when his *perizôma* "loincloth" slipped off. Orsippus won the race, and four years later all the competitors lined up naked to run.⁴³

What is most plausible about this story is the athlete's search for an edge. Anyone as primed to win as an Olympic competitor would strip naked for an extra advantage. In 1968 Dick Fosbury won the gold medal in high jump with his new method nicknamed the Fosbury Flop, and soon that became the commonest high-jump technique. Less plausible is the thought that ancient judges would tolerate premeditated exposure. What if Olympic swimmers today showed up at the pools naked? Would that catch on too?

"Not the same thing at all," you say. "Back then nudity was acceptable." But Pausanias is purporting to explain what *made* it acceptable. Greek practice can't be invoked to account for a would-be explanation of Greek practice.

The skeptic also wonders how great the advantage of nudity would have been. Did a strip of wool really interfere with a sprint more than untethered genitals would have done? That at least is an empirical question; but while many ancient practices have been subjected to modern tests, I do not know of any timed races run with and without *perizôma*. Nor can I imagine how one's boxing skills would improve in the absence of the same strip of wool.⁴⁴

Such objections are ultimately unnecessary, because Pausanias says more than enough to undermine his own credibility. In the ancient Olympics, as he informs his readers much later in his book, not only athletes were naked but their trainers as well. A parallel explanation is out of the question, that a trainer stripped accidentally and then trained his man better. So Pausanias offers a story

about a widow named Kallipateira who trained her athlete son and accompanied him to the Games. She dressed in drag, no women being allowed among competitors and trainers; but then the boy won, she leaped over the dividing fence, snagged her cloak on the fence, and the secret was out. The judges spared Kallipateira's life out of respect for the number of champions in her family, but guarded against a repetition of the scandal by thenceforth mandating nudity for all trainers in attendance.⁴⁵

Either story would have stood a chance at being (amazing but) true. They can't both be true. Not only do we get two populations at the Olympics ending up undressed at different times, one via spontaneous populism and the other by official fiat; but even the nudity that these two events led to was not the same state. The trainers' nudity facilitated inspection, making concealment undesirable as Socrates in the *Republic* would find being clothed to be undesirable concealment. The athletes' nudity improved their performance despite the shock of their otherwise undesired unconcealment. This is not like birds', mammals', and insects' all growing wings that are different from one another. All those wings make the winged animals fly. Nudity does not play any one role among Olympic participants.

Pausanias's willingness to peddle both origin stories gives the explanations an insistent sound. He feels the need to say something no matter what it is. Nudity is not the natural costume or default but something out of the ordinary: an arrival in need of explanation.

Here it is significant that a rival account from an earlier imperial author, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, partly agrees with Pausanias, though in one detail it is more plausible. Dionysius claims that nudity began at the Olympics with Acanthus of Sparta, who dropped his cloth on purpose. Ancients were readier to attribute the innovation to Sparta than to Megara (as witness the accounts in Thucydides and Plato), and Pausanias's first readers may well have laughed away his anecdotes, believing themselves in possession of better stories. But Dionysius too locates the Game-changing event at the fifteenth Olympics. If the Olympics had been held every fourth year from the start, and therefore began in 776 BC, the fifteenth Games would have taken place in 720. (If the event had originally been held more frequently, then the Olympics started after 776, making the fifteenth Olympiad probably later, though this depends on when the timing changed.)

However far apart the games were held, the year 720 is relevant above all for *not* being the date that the Olympics began. Both authors specify that nudity appeared at the fifteenth Olympics, so that an athletic institution had to have been established before the first nudity. An old tradition evidently attributes nudity among athletes to some change that took place after the establishment of the Games. Whatever else Pausanias is wrong about, he is right to seek a reason behind athletic nudity. Something needs accounting for.

The year 720 also comes after modern estimates for the composition of the Homeric epics. While seeking to represent the earlier Bronze Age that they chronicle, Homer's poems simultaneously reflect practices and ways of life from

the time they were written, roughly the middle of the eighth century; and in Book 23 of the *Iliad*, an extended account of the funeral games for Patroclus gives no indication of nudity among its participants. The boxers are said to be girt or belted.⁴⁸ Had the Olympics begun with naked competition (or had there been naked competition at other regular games before then), one of the events depicted in Homer would have anachronistically reflected the fact. Nudity was not the natural outfit for sports, even if Pausanias fails to identify the reason it was first and artificially adopted.

Inspection, sexual and otherwise

Despite how far-fetched it sounds that a woman trained her athlete son, and successfully hid her sex at the Olympics, and took that big leap over the fence when he won, one part of that story rings true as the story about running a race naked does not. If you want to identify a person's sex, stripping them is an effective way to do it. Nudity may not increase your speed but it really does permit inspection, as it still does in medical examinations.

Other ancient sources connect naked inspection with athletics. Aelian, a Roman author from the generation or so after Pausanias, reports that in Sparta the ephebes presented themselves naked to the governing ephors, so that everyone could tell who was fit or flabby. 49 The openness to scrutiny fits everyone's stereotype of the intrusive Spartan state and ethos. This archaic panopticon renders the political subject fully visible.

The latent sadism in such scrutiny surfaces in a very different Spartan display of bodies that Xenophon attributes to Sparta's King Agesilaus. While on campaign against the Persians, the Spartan army takes some prisoners, and Agesilaus gets the idea to strip the Persians naked for his soldiers to see. Soft bodies (the Persians never exercised), pale skin (they were always fully dressed): this would be like fighting women! The Spartan hearts lifted.⁵⁰

The yearning for openness to view also informs the Republic's call for men's and women's naked exercise together, as Chapter 6 said. Socrates calls the act of dressing at the gymnasium sugkaluptein "covering, hiding." And several examples of nakedness found in other dialogues are relevant here as well. On one occasion Socrates pictures a doctor telling his patient to bare chest and back for examination.⁵¹ And the myth that closes Plato's Gorgias pictures a nudity far removed from Athenian glamor and the beauty of a healthy young body. Socrates chronicles the change in afterlife judgment that Zeus instituted after taking over the world from his father. In the old days, human beings had presented themselves for judgment fully dressed, misrepresenting their characters. Zeus postponed the judgment until after they were dead, when souls stood naked before the divine tribunal. Nakedness, whether metaphorical or literal, is the condition for the truest scrutiny.⁵²

Looking can turn erotic – as scopophilia under pathological or clandestine conditions, but often enough quite frankly, as stares and leers. Nudity facilitates that kind of inspection, and nudity at the gymnasium had sexual significance

for the Greeks long before the Romans disapproved of it on those grounds. The first appearance of the verb *gumnazesthai* "to exercise nude" may be in the archaic poet Theognis, and this couplet of his that has been dated to the mid-sixth century, before the Persian Wars and before Athenian democracy:

The happy man is whoever exercises [gumnazetai] while loving [erôn], and comes home to sleep all day with a handsome boy.⁵³

Plato's Laws looks at the same culture more dyspeptically, but 200 years after Theognis the association is the same. The cities with the most pederastic love are the ones with the most active participation in gymnasia.⁵⁴ At about the time that Plato was writing the Laws, a courtroom speech by Aeschines refers to laws regulating sexual relations in gyms and wrestling rooms. The speech calls those laws traditional, and other sources claim Solon as the origin for regulations against slaves in gymnasia.⁵⁵ But whether or not they go back that far, the laws were in force in Plato's adult lifetime and reflected a general belief of his time about the effect of nudity at the gymnasium.

Chaste nudity

Some Athenians took pains to dissociate nudity from sexual practice, not denying the connection that could exist between the two but reading open eroticism as a natural temptation to be guarded against by naked boys, thus making the connection into something that could be identified and stopped. It is as if (in theory) the origin and justification for nudity were something other than sex, so that with a little effort one could keep the nudity without having to accept the sex.

The debate at the heart of the *Clouds* contains one voice meant to represent Old Times, which comes from *dikaios logos* "Right Thinking." Defending a traditional education against Wrong Thinking, who stands for the sophistic schools now enrolling Athenian boys, Right Thinking sketches the outcome of the older form of education. He elegizes the days of trim and lovely but chaste young men – that is, young men who knew how to remain modest and honorable despite the attractiveness that steady exercise gave them.

What Right Thinking recalls has an idealizing sound. Boys walked naked through the snow. They sang hymns keeping their thighs apart to prevent sexual self-stimulation. At the trainer's house (where they presumably gathered for collective exercise) the pubescent youths kept their legs extended on the ground, to deter lecherous looks at their privates, and then smoothed out the sand when they stood up, lest they leave a salacious image in the dirt. A boy kept his genitals as dewy and downy as a fresh quince or apricot, by never rubbing oil on himself below the navel. To this day, Right Thinking says, the good young man spends his time at the gymnasium (he mentions the Academy by name) earning a muscular physique for his labors, unlike the indolent

student of the sophists, whose logic-parsing and indoorsy braininess leave him soft and oversexed.⁵⁷

Anyone who talked like that today would be an old lecher out of Central Casting, denying sexual pleasures to others while proving he was unable to think of anything else. But one does not assess this passage by wondering what would happen today if you asked parents about their son's quince-like scrotum. Aristophanes accepts same-sex desire as a part of Athenian life, and even this reproachful speech understands that grown men find boys attractive. Right Thinking gives these concrete examples not because they haunt him and slip into his language parapraxically, but because in his time only a prudish mind used euphemisms about such things. Likewise today, someone who wanted to insist that men use condoms would not surround the statement with euphemisms about "the verge of finishing" and "Cupid's sturdy messenger." Right Thinking's frankness is the frankness of pragmatic regulation.

The product of sophistical schools, Wrong Thinking makes more immediate psychological sense to modern readers. Quick-thinking, a stay-at-home, curious about science and other cerebral pursuits – therefore weak, squinty, oversensitive to cold – what the Athenians called a young sophist looks like what Americans call a science or engineering nerd. Stereotypical nerds are not religiously observant and restrained. They may well be virginal, but not by choice. If anything the stereotype shows us nerd boys panting and lusting where their socialized peers know how to play it cool and get the girl.⁵⁸

Reading Right Thinking psychologically, and looking for hypocritical prurience in his nostalgia, misses the point of the ideal he is nostalgic about. Reading him psychologically presupposes that sexual regulations are about the mind and the desires it permits itself; but the ideal that Right Thinking invokes is a sexual regulation of the body. He is not engaged in denying anyone's desires, even his own. He links the discipline of regular exercise with the discipline of refusing sexual advances, not with a fantasy of innocence. The young athletic man possesses a control over his body that his brainy flabby antipode does not have and seems not to want. If naked public exercise makes for new temptations, it also creates the body strong enough to ward those temptations off.

The question is not whether Right Thinking is dreaming, for of course he is. He has his own rude wake at the end of this scene, when Wrong Thinking reminds him that every man around Athens is euruprôktos "open-anus," a frequent passive participant in intercourse. Right Thinking looks into the audience, sees that crowd full of loose ani too, and flees defeated. But there would be no comedy in it if Right Thinking had been dreaming alone, and the Wrong Thinking that this play associates with Socrates would pose no threat to Athens. The chaste athlete was at least one ideal honored in democratic Athens. The very existence of the ideal may imply that it was often ignored, as "Thou shalt not kill" tells us murders were committed in the community that first received that command. But concluding that the ideal had no effect just because it failed to describe actual behavior is like saying that everyone murdered freely because

some people did, that "murderous" had positive connotations and "Those cigarettes will kill you" is said as a good thing.

The ideal of chaste athleticism meets lusting reality in the speech that Alcibiades makes about Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. He admits to having invited Socrates for a wrestle, hoping to seduce him, but that Socrates merely wrestled – as you were supposed to, Alcibiades does not say, but his abashed confessional tone implies as much. Socrates shows not just his sexual self-control but the variety of self-control that Greek morality admired. Strange man, that Socrates, he obeyed the rules that the rest of us praise but ignore.

The chaste athlete appears elsewhere in Plato too, even if the appearance of an ideal in his dialogues is not good evidence for the ideal at work in Athenian culture at large. The Athenian Stranger, speaking in Plato's *Laws* on behalf of physical culture (and despite earlier warnings about gyms and wrestling rooms), enunciates the disciplinary ideal. A man would avoid sexual desire more easily *eu to soma echôn* "having his body in good condition." We would have heard (the Athenian says) about Iccus of Tarentum, the winner at Olympia and elsewhere, who desired victory so strongly that during his whole period of *askêsis* "training" he never took hold of woman or boy. And there are stories of others like him. 61

The Athenian Platonizes the point. Iccus and the others had no great education for their souls; all they wanted was to win at the games. The good city's boys will be encouraged to hold themselves back for the sake of the much greater victory over pleasures. The step into Platonic symbolism is unmistakable, metaphorical victory within the soul taking the place of mere Olympic championship. The *Phaedrus* uses a similar metaphor, calling sexual self-control the true Olympic event. The *Laws* does not rest with metaphors, though, but gives the new inward competition the same behavioral effect that the old bodily competition had. Rather than turn Greek athleticism into a new athleticism that amounts to self-control, it appeals to the old athleticism as the best kind of self-control thus far available. The passage would make no sense unless Greeks before Plato had already attributed sexual abstinence to the athlete; and it agrees with them. 62

Sources contemporary to Plato testify to the ideal of athletic chastity. Boys exercising were acknowledged to be a beautiful sight, but were expected to hold themselves aloof despite the attention from older men. The unstated reasoning seems to be that the objects of desire are able to hold themselves back more easily than the ones desiring them can. They are not gripped by longing as the desirers are, so they have a greater responsibility for refusing sexual contact. Athletic self-control is part of the larger ideal of the unaroused passive object of *erôs*. Here the visual record weighs in, with e.g. images of the young man refusing an older man's advances. 63

Sexual restraint was probably the purpose of the one item young athletes did "wear," the infibulation, a ribbon of leather that ties around the foreskin.⁶⁴ The leather strip was called a *kunodesma* "dog leash"; "dog" was a slang word for the penis, which made whatever tied around the end of it a leash. The

implication that one holds back one's dogged qualities is right on the surface. Although the tying has been interpreted as serving a hygienic purpose, or a purpose imagined to be hygienic in antiquity, the first consequence of the binding that people would have noticed is the difficulty of achieving an erection while tied. If the athlete dressed in anything it was a restraining harness.

Even if nudity appeared in the gymnasium in recognition of the Greeks' open homosexual practices, the subsequent explicitness would have inspired the counterpressure of sexual regulation, in the form of an ideal that interpreted the nudity as something other than licentious. In that case, as I have been saying, the task is to spell out that interpretation. Even if we are only pretending to be more interested in a non-sexual feature of nudity, we need to identify that feature and remind ourselves what we are pretending.

More likely the connection between athletic nudity and pederasty was not directly causal. The two simple causal claims would be that, on the one hand, existing sexual relations between men and adolescents grew to incorporate exercise together, which because of its erotic origins remained *naked* exercise; on the other, that such exercise together in light dress or no dress offered a natural outlet to sexual pressures otherwise restricted among young men. Either sex eventually led to gymnasium culture or vice versa.

The historical record, as incomplete as it is, seems to rule out both hypotheses in their direct and reductive forms – which are the forms that would bring this inquiry to an end, asserting that nudity is sex and sex nudity and that is all you need to know. Although Thucydides must be wrong in dating Athenian nudity to the recent past, and Socrates speaking in the *Republic* too, the grain of truth in their accounts is that nudity arrived in Greece late, some time after "both openly displayed pederasty and formal Olympic athletics." Nudity could have taken hold in the late seventh century, 650–600, but certainly (in Athens) by 550. Archaic poetry attests to freely expressed pederastic love before those dates; and even if the Greeks' own date of 776 for the founding of the Olympics is wrong, the correct date must be before 700.

Again, it would be perverse to deny a connection between all-male nudity and all-male sexuality. Deprived of both simplistic causal claims, we can agree with Thomas Scanlon that the two phenomena encouraged one another. "Athletic nudity ... fostered and was fostered by pederasty in Greece generally." Because institutionally recognized relations between man and youth already existed in archaic Greece, the onset of frequent collective exercise could encourage such relations without having to overcome a social stigma. Meanwhile, established customs of exercise and training for competition meant that erotic attachments could sublimate themselves into ideals of fit bodies. Pederasty and physical culture spurred each other's development into a highly articulated custom of exercise that acknowledged its potential for sexual expression even while exerting itself to prevent that expression.

The question then remains, where that peculiarly Greek nudity came from, and what significance might have lingered around the practice despite its eroticized transformation.

Ritual nudity

The search for an origin leads back to religion. Because divine nudity – the representation of gods' bodies undressed – will not account for the Greek human practice, the religious phenomenon to look at is ritual. Here the relevant first observation is that on all ancient evidence the Olympics and other games precede their participants' nudity. No stories of the first games' founding make their original competitors naked; and there is the counterevidence from Homer. Scanlon's comment is reasonable: "Significantly, no sources ever say that the Olympic organizers instituted or required nudity, which is what one would expect if it had religious or ritual significance."

That athletic events themselves grew out of religious practices, many or all of them out of initiation rituals in particular, is undeniable.⁶⁹ The literature is too long to summarize: specific rites for the earliest games we have descriptions of, such as those at the funeral of Patroclus; elaborate religious observances at both pan-Hellenic events and local festivals, of which the best known is the Panathenaea. In one example from the Platonic corpus, the *Lysis*, the ritual specifically suggests young males' social initiation. The *Lysis* opens with Socrates walking from the Academy to the Lyceum – a cute joke in later years, when those two gyms became the sites of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy respectively, but even without that retrospective meaning an affirmation of Athenian philosophy's intimacy among Athenian athletics.

There is an artlessness in the foreground companionate to the artlessness of nudity, if just as much in need of explanation. Socrates is narrating the dialogue without even an implied interlocutor, as he otherwise does only in the Charmides and the Republic.⁷⁰ In the opening sentence he tells the reader he was "crossing over from the Academy straight to the Lyceum," when he ran into Hippothales. Hippothales asked where he was going and Socrates replied, "crossing over from the Academy straight to the Lyceum."⁷¹ The sentence performs the illocutionary act of informing Hippothales about Socrates' fondness for gymnasia while it works on the reader as a perlocutionary effect, for the reader as if overhearing figures that Socrates is candid; so that the words of Socrates in this union of illocution with perlocution bring candor into conversation with gymnastic. As it happens Socrates never makes it to the Lyceum, which is why we find initiation rites in this dialogue, because of the detour Socrates makes. Hippothales has a certain boy in mind, and the two go into a new wrestling room where they find Lysis and Menexenus. The palaistra has just finished celebrating the Hermaia. Grown men are permitted, as the presence of Socrates shows, so a rule barring adults from the Hermaia must have been enacted after this dialogue's dramatic date. Nevertheless the later existence of such a rule does imply that the Hermaia served as a young men's festival, an initiatory rite. And in the Lysis this rite seems to consist principally in competitive games among the young initiates.

If Greek athletics belonged among special rituals, we also have some reason to associate rituals, from a point soon after the Bronze Age, with young men's nudity. There are stories from Crete about young men of initiatory age

collected into agelê "herds" i.e. as if they were beasts.⁷² In Sparta, the other Dorian region most committed to initiations, the best known was the gumno-paidiai "naked playing" or "naked games." The report, again from Crete, of older men "abducting" boys for a two-months' retreat in the wild, clearly describes an initiatory practice; and the information that the two are sunthêreusantes "hunting together, catching beasts" might refer to a re-enacted chase in which the young one plays the animal's part.⁷⁴

The only non-Dorian region on the Peloponnesian peninsula, Arcadia, told another kind of initiatory tale, one that did not involve older men as mentors but did entail nudity. A young man was chosen by lot to be the city's temporary wolf. He went to a lake, left his clothes on the shore, and swam to the other side, after which he was a wolf for eight years. During those years he had to take care not to eat human flesh, so that after the period was over he could regain human form.⁷⁵

The Arcadian story reads as the mythic cover or backdated justification for a ritual. Even without the mentoring and the implied pederasty of Dorian traditions, the adolescent's nudity lets him stand apart from both the boys whose company he's leaving and the men he will join. In a modern vocabulary of initiation, the initiate enters a liminal state between his past and future conditions. And in these stories about Greek initiations the liminal state is apparently marked by the participant's nudity. Rather than bring the initiate to the generic or true human essence, this ritual nudity puts him outside human society, maybe even locating him in the wilderness. "Nudity finds its original place as a 'costume' in the context of the initiation of youths," Bonfante writes, ⁷⁶ her word "costume" drawing attention to the artifice in Greek nudity, its temporary and stagey quality – not what you might expect if (as Jullien finds among the Greeks) nudity represented nature unadorned.

But while "costume" draws the right attention to the conventions surrounding nudity in Greek ritual, even so dismissing Jullien's way of understanding Greek nudity should not mean ignoring the role of the natural. Bonfante's title does not say that nudity is *nothing but* a costume. It participates in some of the purposes and functions of a costume. The boys as herd and the boy who swims his way into a wolf's body do connect themselves with their natural forms when they strip. It falsifies this use of nudity to equate it with the natural, but not because it is all artifice.

Thus I take exception to Richard Sennett's reading Thucydides as proof that Greek nudity was cultural not natural – e.g. "The naked, beautiful body seems a gift of Nature, but Thucydides, we recall, wrote about nakedness as an achievement of civilization," as if we had to make it one or the other, civilized therefore unnatural. More globally Ruth Barcan overstates the point saying, "The natural state is, in fact, *unnatural*," and quoting John Berger, "Nudity is a form of dress." Denying Greek nudity's naturalness neglects something about its uses in ancient Greece as surely as denying the artifice in it does. Nudity is indeed a consciously chosen mode of presentation of the body – in this respect an artifice – but it is also one that was chosen because it

represented the body in its natural form. Whatever we say about those practices that set ancient Greece at such a distance from our own lives, we will have to put "nature" into the equation together with "civilization," if a description containing both terms can survive the threat of contradiction.

Ritual nudity and athletics

Whatever survived of archaic initiations into the classical period, whatever this youthful nudity would have represented to Plato, and however we articulate its meaning today, it does seem reasonable to see the athletes' nudity as a continuation of the initiates'. Some specific connections are too speculative to insist on. For example, that double nudity at the Olympics that ties Pausanias into explanatory knots – both athletes and their trainers' having to strip – may carry over from initiations that involved pederastic mentors. But only maybe. While a trainer does make a good mentor, those other stories of initiation did not involve the mentor's nudity. Cultic explanations manage to be easy and exciting at the same time, and skeptics have raised tough objections both to the ritualistic beginnings of organized athletics and to the specific start of athletic nudity.⁷⁹

A more general explanation sounds more reliable. Nudity accompanies some passages into adulthood. Young males of initiatory age are also engaged in athletics and exercise, again naked; and their athletic competitions seem to emerge from initiatory rituals. The ritual nudity must have been the source for the athletic nudity that appeared later.

The Greeks did have athletics and athletic competitions before the advent of athletic nudity. They even had regularly celebrated games before nudity, which is to say events with their connections to religious ceremony already in place. The athletes' nudity could still have its origins in ritual then, but it would have had to travel by another route to arrive at competitive athletics. Some indirect causation is at work.

The indirect causation may resemble something that occurred in the US of the present, where sporting events begin with the national anthem. The story goes that American spectators began singing their national anthem before every game during World War II, out of collective guilt at watching baseball while US troops were fighting overseas, or (to say it positively) out of a wish to announce their solidarity with the troops. Afterwards it must never have felt like the right time to stop the practice, and no one wanted to be seen proposing that it be done away with. American team sports did not begin in a patriotic moment or with any other inherent connection to "The Star-Spangled Banner." The song came to join the sporting event, as an act already possessed of solemnity, to impart solemnity to the game.

Now, it is possible that by the same kind of logic, nudity came to Greek athletics without losing its religious charge and indeed on account of the charge it carried, contributing a sense of ritual that was considered appropriate to the serious occasion. Their nudity underscored the Greeks' sense that their games belonged among divine things.

After that it is easy to go on to speculations. If nudity appeared in athletics just when the games were becoming worldly, this emblem of the sacred could have served as a corrective to that secularization, intensifying the sense of holy rite that was in danger of being forgotten. We know that at some point in the archaic era the winning athletes had begun reaping worldly benefits. Their families paid poets to write songs in their honor; their home cities rewarded them with cash and other practical benefits. That would have been a good time to reaffirm the sacred import of competition and victory, before such tangible benefits erased the significance.

The idea is not open to straightforward proof. Nor does it have to be. As long as the broader point stands, that Greek athletics in moving to naked participation added a sacralizing element to already-ritualized events, the particular occasion of that sacralizing may have taken place in any number of ways. But the late arrival of nudity – the fact *that* it arrived rather than having always been part of athletics – does not have to contradict its beginning in (initiatory) religious ceremony.

Civic nudity

If there is something in the end to the ritual meanings still carried by Greek nudity during the classical age, those meanings might amount to a way of conferring seriousness on a man's undressed condition. The ideal of a chaste nudity also bespeaks seriousness, at least a reminder that nudity serves other than erotic purposes.

The evocation of martial readiness bestows another kind of seriousness on nudity, or rather an interpretation of the serious as the civilized. Bonfante speaks of the Greek hoplite's "civic nudity," by which she means the use of undress to mark the free man of the city who owned his armor and fought to keep his homeland independent.

The hoplite's nudity indicated or signaled his readiness for battle and his manliness. Hence the imagery in many vase paintings dating to before the establishment of Athenian democracy, archaic figures dressed for battle while still incongruously naked. They wear a helmet, greaves over their shins, and sometimes a breastplate on the chest, and they carry a shield and spear as fighting men have to. Otherwise – nothing. But in fact soldiers could not have faced a charging army with their genitals exposed; even aside from undergarments they might have worn into battle, the quantity of armor that hoplites put on was enough to make the nudity symbolic. Considering the helmet and greaves, and always (in real life) the bronze cuirass that covered his torso from the waist up, with *pteruges* "wings, flaps" hanging from the cuirass over the groin, more than half the surface of a hoplite's body would be covered. 81

The blend of hoplite armor and nudity in these images on Greek vases has a point, but I think it is an ideological purpose and not the depiction of actual practices. Ideologically the depiction blends two distinct portrayals of the Greek man, the athletic competitor and the battlefield warrior. By the time of Plato's

death the mixture had become inescapable: "it was not absolute nudity but the condition of being *naked and armed* that had become the characteristic 'heroic costume." "82

The improbability of the mixed portrayal and of the blending it promises turns desperate in a later kind of story about Greek fighters. The authors who first mention these stories are writing centuries after Plato, but it is striking that two versions of the same story type exist, and that the events they speak of belong to Plato's day, more or less, one of them from decades before his death and the other from a few decades after.

The first story is about a young Spartan Isadas (sometimes Isidas). In 362 the Theban army, which had achieved an astonishing victory over Sparta at the Battle of Leuctra some years before, now surged into the Spartan homeland. Epaminondas, the general who led the Theban army at Leuctra and again on this drive into Laconia, had deflated the Spartans' reputation for invincibility in the battlefield, and they never regained their hegemonic power.

Plutarch's *Life of Agesilaus* tells the first extant version of the invasion, drawn (he says) from early sources. Plutarch's version includes the anecdote of Isadas, tall and beautiful, on the verge of manhood when the Theban army came. Isadas, "naked without armor or clothes, having just oiled his body, and holding a spear in one hand and a sword in the other, leapt from his house." (Why had he oiled himself at home? A century after Plutarch, Aelian retells the story saying Isadas left the gymnasium to fight. Blunging into the Theban ranks, Isadas brought many soldiers down, without suffering a wound himself. Afterwards the ephors, Sparta's governors, are said to have *stephanôsantes* "garlanded, crowned" him, as well as fining him a thousand drachmas for risking his life so recklessly. Based of the same of t

Sparta had fallen far already and would soon be a political irrelevance, but just before the end their young champion took some Thebans down by wondrous means. Isadas recalls the most famous losing Spartans of all time (rare birds from the Greek city that had a reputation for never losing), the 300 at Thermopylae who did *not* escape harm, but whom Herodotus describes as fighting with less and less: with swords when their spears broke, then "with their hands and mouths," by which he must mean biting.⁸⁵

But more exactly Isadas calls the later figure Dioxippus to mind, an Olympic champion from the time of Alexander who had joined Alexander's army. Dioxippus had won at the all-out fighting event called the *pankration*. At a banquet during Alexander's campaign through Asia, the Macedonian soldier Koragos challenged Dioxippus to a duel. Macedonians made up the core of Alexander's troops, but he also relied on non-Macedonian Greeks, and those fighters probably resented Macedonia's supplantation of the older Greek and independent cities. The resentment drives this story: Dioxippus belonged to a civilization that had been rendered irrelevant by the Macedonians, as the Thebans had rendered Sparta irrelevant.

Koragos came to the duel fully armored, sword and spears in his hands. Dioxippus brought only a club and his oiled body. He outmaneuvered Koragos

and pinned him, his foot on Koragos's throat, and Alexander signaled for the fight to end. Alexander was displeased at this embarrassment to Macedonia's name. Soon Dioxippus came to a bad end because of a plot to shame him – a plot in which Alexander was complicit – and he fell on his sword. Afterwards, says Diodorus Siculus (the main source for this story), Alexander missed the valiant hero and regretted his own inattention to his merits.⁸⁶

Pitting athletes against soldiers, as these stories do, evokes a long-standing Greek debate about whether exercise at the gymnasium existed in order to train citizens for war. It is a debate parallel to the one, touched on in Chapter 3, about the proper relationship between athletics and intellectual achievement, and the two critiques could reinforce each other.

The late author Philostratus attributes boxing to the Spartans' preparation for war;⁸⁷ but as early as the first appearance of athletes in Homer, namely *Iliad* 23 and the funeral games of Patroclus, we also find grounds for distinguishing athleticism from soldiering. Epeios challenges all comers to box, hugely confident he can beat them all in the ring. He is undistinguished at warfare, Epeios admits. But a man can't be best at everything, and *he* is best at boxing.⁸⁸

Perhaps Homer can be read both ways. Does the success that the greatest Achaean heroes have at the funeral games imply that those best at war are best at sports too? In the *Odyssey* Nestor calls his son both a great warrior and a fast runner, as if those two forms of excellence were related; and the *Iliad*'s story of Tydeus at Thebes connects athletic competition with military skills, though without making the one a cause of the other. 90

After Homer, skepticism about the military value of training at the gym was sometimes voiced. Already in the seventh century the poet Tyrtaeus did distinguish excellence in warfare from athletic excellence, calling them two different types of aretê and the warfare aretê the better one. Solon, in pre-democratic Athens, said that athletes contributed nothing to the city's safety; then in the classical period the title character of the now fragmentary Autolycus, by Euripides unleashed a tirade against athletics that included the claim of its military use-lessness. Xenophon contrasted athletics with good preparations for warfare indirectly in his praise for hunting, directly when encouraging participation in horsemanship. And in the fourth century the Theban general Epaminondas, the one who finally ended Sparta's military domination over Greece, told his own fellow citizens that if they wanted to conquer their rivals they should spend their time in forts not wrestling rooms.

By contrast it is Socrates (in his poems of all places!) who allegedly said the best dancers are the best at war. 93 And even that is praise for dancing rather than for training at the gymnasium.

Much later Galen, advocating exercise with a small ball, contrasts the sound military preparation that comes from a game with a ball to the dubious exercises that competitive athletes engage in. Michael Poliakoff documents what seem to have been persistent nay-sayings. Among the skeptics was Plato himself, wondering how serviceable athletics would be for professional soldiers, and preferring – somewhat as Galen does – team war-games as part of training.

The stories of Isadas and Dioxippus do presuppose the cultural question about what military value comes of gymnasium culture. They even act out that question. Given that it was the Theban army associated with Epaminondas that Isadas attacked, he can be seen as offering a last plea on behalf of the wrestling room. But these stories do not assume an answer to the question; they are not out to prove that the good athlete is the best soldier. Not only had such a claim been disputed and dismissed too often to be assumed, but the point of either story would have been lost if the playing field clearly prepared you for the battlefield. There is no moral to the story, there's not even a story, if a champion runner is recruited during wartime to deliver a message. *These* champions' victories are different. They are surprises and meant to surprise.

The surprises make these stories a particular type of loser's tale. Stupendous self-sacrifice brings a symbolical victory against the backdrop of overall defeat. The biblical Samson's death belongs in that genre, a weak note of encouragement worth something only to the vanquished. But the stories of Isadas and Dioxippus, from the time that Greece was being marginalized politically, contain touches of decorum that are not always found in tales of the doomed last stand. Dioxippus wins with his foot on Koragos's neck, and a signal from Alexander to acknowledge his victory, the way a judge might signal victory for a pankratiast. Isadas receives a *stephanos* "crown of branches" for his valor, as winners received in the important Greek games, which for that reason were called the "stephanitic" games.

In other words this is not the loser's tale that closes with a sneaky last action. Something like the opposite, this is an image of continuing to play by the rules when the game has been ended. With the prize of the *stephanos* after Sparta's loss of power and prestige, and the victory by pinning to the mat although Macedonia has eclipsed Greek culture, Isadas and Dioxippus offer the temporary consolation that the forces of civilization still have some effect, within larger contexts that show military force triumphant, heedless of civilization. They are in their way the dance band on the *Titanic*.

For the same reason the two men are naked, because these are not (nor do they claim to be) practical illustrations of how useful athletic training is for military fighting. They wear their nakedness as the costume for a fight even against enemies who have nothing but overwhelming force. These stories find nudity in the mid- and late fourth century something elaborately developed beyond – developed *upon* – what initiation rituals might have once seen as the natural quality of the naked form. The Cretan boy hunt does translate its prey into nature by making him run naked, as the Arcadian wolf-boy story turns him into a wild thing after he leaves his clothes on the shore. The gymnasium as a whole evoked the wild inasmuch as it lay outside the city walls and used uncultivated grounds. ⁹⁹

The losers' tales of the fourth century reflect a tradition accustomed to defining itself by its athletic nudity. Classical authors regularly cite their own people's nudity as a distinguishing mark of Greek civilization. The symbolization of the natural, by virtue of its symbolizing act, now symbolizes a symbolizing

non-nature. Nudity has become an emblem of civilization precisely because it symbolizes nature and does not amount or reduce to nature and the natural.

Nudity continues to carry that *gravitas* that got it connected with athletics in the first place. So Dioxippus can wondrously defeat a heavily armed man, and even more wondrously Isadas can plunge into an enemy phalanx without suffering a wound. Their nudity protects them talismanically.¹⁰⁰

Nudity alone does not guarantee victory, for otherwise there would be no losers at the Olympics. Nudity helped Orsippus win, but only until everyone copied his winning move. Nudity acquires its force by going where it does not belong.

In the language that we use for initiations, the initiate can only take on a temporary status between that of human boy and human man if he is something unknown to human society. And in something close to an inversion of this signification, Isadas and Dioxippus, naked when no one around them is, thereby become the lone civilized men in populations that have regressed to (non-Greek) brutality. Being civilized is their secret supernatural protection. So embedded in Greek life as to represent civilization (to Greeks, naturally), still redolent of ritual, nudity unites *nomos* with the *theion* in its person. For a moment the trappings of civilization are divinely efficacious, thanks to being civilized.

Theaetetus

The question of what nudity can mean returns the argument to the first part of this book, as in one of those stories about shipwrecked sailors who finally reach a shore, where they gather up the cast-off clothes they find and tramp up the coastline, only to round a promontory and see their hometown ahead.

In this case the town is Athens, home to Socrates, though soon he will be gone and in need of being replaced. The oiled and naked body belongs to Theaetetus, but Socrates also tries to persuade Theodorus to get in the ring and take a fall for Protagoras.

As athletes do, and such displaced fighters as Isadas and Dioxippus, Theaetetus has rubbed himself with oil. Just before we see him – and while he and his friends are pouring oil over each other's bodies – Theodorus describes him with the metaphor of flowing oil. Theaetetus takes naturally to learning: glides into knowledge. "He comes toward his studies and inquiries like a *rheuma* [stream, flow, current] of oil flowing noiselessly."

In the first part of their conversation, Socrates will remind Theaetetus that the Heracliteans equate *rhoê* "flow" with being and life. So the oil that once more associates naked wrestling with knowledgeable philosophizing puts both those activities into a healthy domain of life and love and new births.

But the same Socrates who pictures philosophy as wrestling also reminds Theaetetus of the capacity for warfare in philosophers. Anyone who has engaged in frank arguments knows they can cross a line from lively debate into open aggression and blood drawn. We saw Homer in the role of general leading a mighty host of philosophers from Protagoras to Epicharmus. There

are irregular fighters too, like the mercenary peltasts that Theaetetus will have to face when Sophists come after him. 103 (Peltasts were soldiers without armor, defended by a light shield, who did not march in formation with the phalanx of hoplites but skirmished at the edges of a fight, harassing the enemy. They were often hired by a city as reinforcements for the hoplites.)

The philosophers of Ephesus fight as irregulars too. Socrates emphasizes their use of bow and arrow, weaponry that a hoplite disdained to use. The one great Spartan surrender during the Peloponnesian War occurred at Sphacteria, where the Athenians barraged the Spartans with arrows and missiles instead of meeting them the manly way, phalanx against phalanx. Arrows made for lawless warfare, as those Spartans implied who complained that an arrow could not tell good man from bad. ¹⁰⁵

If the dialogue's images of wrestling and the flow of oil recall its setting in an Athenian gymnasium, the framing dialogue connects this talk of battles and weaponry with the event that inspired the conversation, the battle of Corinth that Theaetetus fought in as an adult man, and at which he contracted a likely fatal dysentery. Dysentery makes diarrhea flow, but in wars a flowing motion promises death rather than life.

Philosophy flows, but that flow puts the philosopher either oiled in the gymnasium or dying in lawless battle. He strips to fight; that fighting could be either law-abiding or law-establishing. On one scenario the civilized behavior began once and now only needs to be continued. On the other scenario civilization has yet to begin, the philosopher wrestling to give it a start, or a new start. The double portrait of the philosopher that the first part of this book found moving and shifting through the *Theaetetus* seeks to include both conceptions of the practice, the lone wolf and the hound in the pack.

Isadas and Dioxippus added something essential to this double portrait. Their gymnastic last stands were reminders that the archaic echoes still faintly audible in the fighter's nudity let that nudity be something other than eccentricity. The magic of civilization dwelt in them, as Socrates implies that it dwells in those he tangles with, whom he generously casts as civilizing heroes. The loner as not merely on his own, rather somehow if impossibly the only sane man standing, finally offers a justification for that allegory at the center of the *Theaetetus*, with its figure of the philosopher so different from other Platonic depictions. Under what circumstances could you ever resolve this tension between philosopher as citizen and philosopher as solitary? He'd have to be the only citizen – at home in a city of one, as this figure from the *Theaetetus* seems to be, or is for all he knows given that he can't tell whether his neighbors are human or animal. Maybe they are something in between: non-Greek humans. 106 Even when the general public – the ochlos "mob" – laughs at Socrates' paradigmatic philosopher, they are behaving as multiples of the witty Thracian therapaina "servant girl" who ridicules the absentmindedness of Thales. 107 It is as if the philosopher has become the only native in town, surrounded by foreigners. Rather than move to a different city the philosopher just wants the existing city to civilize itself. Only such a society could let a philosopher stand alone and yet still belong.

Notes

- 1 Class action complaint in Mitch Hightower, Oxene "Gypsy" Taub, George Davis, Russell Mills v. City and County of San Francisco, case no. 12–5841 (filed November 14, 2012): "improper chilling," p. 11; "political expression," p. 4.
- 2 From Order Granting Defendants' Motion to Dismiss, no. C-12–5841, US District Court, Northern District of California.
- 3 City of Erie et al. v. Pap's A.M. tdba "Kandyland," 529 US 277 (2000), p. 294.
- 4 Gen 3:7.
- 5 Iren. Adv. haer. 3.23.5.
- 6 Gen: God sews new clothes, 3:21; Abel's animal sacrifice, 4:4; Abel's death, 4:8.
- 7 Gen: eyes opened, 3:7; Noah's nakedness, 9:21-24; "not ashamed," 2:25.
- 8 Jullien 2007.
- 9 Jullien 2007: 13.
- Jullien 2007: 54; emphasis in original. On naked truth see Barcan 2004: 98–99, 102–104.
- 11 Jullien 2007: 54.
- Perniola (1989) reaches many of the same conclusions but comes to them through discussions of ancient Greece in particular. For Perniola the Greek tradition (later hijacked by Plato) treats the unclothed condition as norm or standard (238–239). He is too quick to reduce all Greek uses of nudity to visibility (e.g. 238).
- 13 The familiar Duc de Luynes French translation of 1647 reads: "tout de même que si je lui avais ôté ses vêtements."
- 14 Jullien 2007: 20.
- 15 Shakespeare, King Lear, III.iv.106–107.
- 16 Berman 1982: 105-110.
- 17 Montesquieu, Persian Letters, 26, 63, 88; Berman 1982: 108, 356n12.
- 18 Burke 2006 [1790]: par. 128; Berman 1982: 109–110.
- 19 Hollander 1993: 157–177.
- Herod. 2.37.2; on Egyptian exclusiveness of circumcision see 2.104.2–4.
- 21 Thus Gal 5:3.
- Two works of Midrash halakhah, legal Bible exegesis, are called *Sifré*, one of them based on the book of Numbers and the other on Deuteronomy.
- 23 Quoted in Eilberg-Schwartz 1995: 17.
- On nakedness in Judaism generally (of which more below) see Satlow 1997. On circumcision and *Sifré to Deuteronomy* 36 see Satlow 1997: 438: "a man's circumcision saves him from absolute 'nakedness."
- Celsus *Med.* 7.25. Celsus's phrase is not the customary Latin for circumcision; indeed he seems to have been the one who coined this use of *glans* "acorn" for the end of the penis. The verb *circumcidere* was already in use by Celsus's time, but it is interesting to note another word sometimes seen, *recutitus*. One character in Petronius jokes *circumcide nos* "circumcise us" (Petron. *Satr.* 102.8), while Trimalchio complains that his slave is *recutitus* (68.8, see next). In the first century of our era this adjective *recutitus* applied clearly to circumcision and to the Jews who practiced it: Mart. *Ep.* 7.30.5; Pers. 5.184 on *recutitaque sabbata* "the Sabbaths of the circumcised." But when Martial speaks of *ruptae recutita colla mulae* "the skinned neck of a broken mule" he can't mean anything but "skinned" (*Ep.* 9.57.4). So this term too suggests that the circumcised penis is in a stripped or denuded condition.
- Petron. Satr. 68. Philo (Spec. leg. 1.1–2) says non-Jews regularly ridiculed circumcision; see Gruen 2011: 184.
- 27 Smith 1966: 218–220; see Poliakoff 1993.
- 28 2 Macc 4:11–14; for similar complaints, 1 Macc 1:14–15. Satlow 1997: 449–450 argues that this opposition is not solely a matter of the athletes' nudity. The

- gymnasium's proximity to the Temple made it blasphemous as a gymnasium in another part of town would not have been.
- 29 Jub. 3:31; in Satlow 1997: 448.
- 30 Crowther 1980: 122.
- 31 Greeks' pederasty and quote from Ennius, Cic. Tusc. 4.33.70; on Mark Antony see Heskel 2001: 138. On Lupercalia see Plut. Caes. 61.1.
- Plin. 15.19; Plut. Mor. 274d–e, Amat. 751f–752a; see also Tac. Ann.14.20, Catull. 63.63–64, on Greek athletic practices and loose morals. See Arieti 1975, Crowther 1980, Percy 1996: 84, Poliakoff 1987: 165n12.
- Plut. Cat. Mai. 20.5–6; on that Roman custom, Cic. Off. 1.35.129, which also remarks that actors would not appear before the public without a loincloth on.
- 34 Herod. 1.10.
- 35 Pl. Sym. 182b-c.
- 36 Bonfante 1989: 564.
- 37 Bonfante 1989.
- 38 Serwint 1993: 421.
- 39 Exod 33:23.
- 40 Hom.: Thersites naked, *Il.* 2.260–264; Odysseus naked, *Od.* 6.126–129. Bonfante 1989: 547, MacCary 1982: 152–162.
- By the classical era and beginning of Athenian democracy, four major games had become known in the Greek-speaking world, each one held every fourth year: the Olympic, Isthmian, Nemean, and Pythian games. But many minor festivals competed with these, some that were likewise open to all entrants, and a much larger number of events held within cities and among their citizens.
- 42 Diog. Laert. 3.86.
- 43 Paus. 1.44.1.
- I have done a little boxing, always presentably dressed, and never feeling encumbered by my shorts.
- 45 Paus. 5.6.7–8.
- 46 Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 7.72.3-4.
- For other variants, see Eust. *Il.* 23, 1. 683: Eustathius names Orsippus but dates the event to the fourteenth Olympiad rather than the fifteenth; likewise Euseb. *Chron.* 1.195.
- 48 Hom. Il. 23.683, 23.685.
- 49 Ael. VH 14.7.
- 50 Xen. Ages. 1.28.
- 51 Pl. Prt. 352a: apokalupsas "revealing" the chest and back.
- 52 Pl. Grg.: myth of judgment, 523a–527a; souls being judged (and those judging) are to be naked, 523e. Plato compares the body to soul's dress again at Crat. 403b psuchê gumnê tou sômatos "the soul naked/stripped of the body" but here the language of obstacle and freedom speaks to the soul's mobility rather than to its visibility. This is another legacy of athletic nudity. Perniola 1989: 239.
- 53 Thgn. 2.1335–1336.
- Plato Laws 1.636c. On ancient gymnastic pederasty see Percy 1996. Some of Percy's ambitious conclusions have been rebutted see below but he usefully treats the developed forms of pederasty from many perspectives. On gymnasia as places to observe young men naked (with erotic intent) see Ar. Birds 139–142, Peace 762–764, Wasps 1023–1024; in Pl. see Chrm. 153a, 154a, Euthyd. 272c–273a. These and other passages are cited in Golden 1984: 317n44. Golden adds, "A number of vases show erastês and eromenos meeting in the palaestra."
- Law against slaves in wrestling rooms: doulon mê gumnazesthai mêde xêraloiphein en tais palaistrais, Aeschin. 1.138 (Aeschin. Tim.). A similar law on Crete: Arist. Pol. 2.1264a21–22; Golden 1984: 317n43. Plut. Sol. 1.6 ascribes a law to Solon

- prohibiting slaves from practicing gymnastics or having a boy lover; see Garlan 1988: 37–38.
- Other translations of these words *dikaios logos* are in circulation and just as natural: Just Speech, Good Logic, etc.
- Ar. Clouds: boys naked in snow, 964–965; singing hymns, 966; sitting at the trainer's, 973–974; smoothing the sand, 974–975; not oiling genitals, 977–978; muscular physique from the gym, 1002–1015; specifically from the Academy, 1005.
- The TV series *The Big Bang Theory* is only the most recent engagement with these generalities.
- 59 Ar. Clouds 1091-1101.
- 60 Pl. Sym 217b-c.
- 61 Pl. Laws: resisting desire, 8.839e; Iccus and others, 8.837e–840a.
- Pl.: Iccus only wanted to win, *Laws* 8.840b; much greater victory over pleasure, 8.840c; the true Olympic event, *Phdr.* 256b.
- Dover 1978: 96–103. For subsequent discussion of visual and other evidence regarding the arousal of the *eromenos* see Halperin 1986: 63–66, esp. 64n11, 65n13.
- On infibulation and male reserve Scanlon 2002: 235; also Sweet 1987: 130–131.
- 65 Percy (1996) argues for a causal link much like this one.
- 66 Scanlon 2002: 96. Scanlon appeals to McDonnell 1991.
- 67 Scanlon 2002: 83; also 212, on "a likely cooperative evolution between the gymnasium and the popular acceptance of homosexuality." McNiven (2003) finds Scanlon's case for this claim "strong."
- 68 Scanlon 2002: 406n45.
- 69 This point is especially indebted to Bonfante 1989: 551–552, Scanlon 2002: 90–96.
- On the nature and meaning of this anomalously direct Socratic narration see Ferrari 2010: 11–12.
- 71 Pl. Lysis 203a-b. The words are identical in Greek.
- 72 Bonfante 1989: 551.
- 73 Paus. 3.11.7; see Cartledge 2001: 102.
- 74 Strab. 10.4.21.
- Burkert 1983: 87. An odd echo of the story appears in Pl. Rep. 8.565d—e; and cf. the distinct but related tale in Paus. 8.2.6.
- 76 Bonfante 1989: 551.
- 77 Sennett 1994: 44.
- Barcan 2004: natural state "unnatural," 2 (emphasis in original); quote from John Berger, 42 (Berger 1972: 54). There is a post-structuralist triumphalism in Barcan that motivates some of these remarks, and is most clearly revealed in "Nature is, we know, a cultural idea" (281). It might be rude to ask what evidence brought this knowledge before our eyes; was all of nature fairly represented in the selection?
- Thus Golden 1998: on cultic origin of Olympics in connection with Pelops, 14; skepticism about anthropological or religious beginnings for nudity at the gymnasium, 68.
- See Hallett 2005: 14. The first chapter of Hallett 2005, "The Greek Background" (5–19), contains excellent summary and discussion of "ideal" nudity, one formulation designed to replace the old "heroic" nudity.
- 81 See chapter 7 in Matthew 2012; also Aldrete et al. 2013: 25, 30.
- 82 Hallett 2005: 14; emphasis in original.
- 83 Ael. VH 6.3.
- 84 Plut. Ages. 34.6–8.
- Herod.: Spartans fighting with swords, 7.224.1; with hands and mouths, 7.225.3. Note that the Spartans exercised naked before the battle, 7.208.3.

- 208 The philosopher's new clothes
 - Diod. Sic. *Bibl. Hist.* 17.100–17.101.6. Diodorus is a Greek author from the first century BC; the tale also appears in Curt. 9.7.16–26 (a work written in the first century AD).
 - Philostr. Gym. 9–10. For a recent defense of the place that Gymnasticus ought to occupy in pedagogy, see König 2009.
 - 88 Hom. Il. 23.668-671.
 - 89 Dickie 1983: 241–243.
 - 90 Hom.: Nestor on his son, Od. 3.111–112; Tydeus at Thebes, Il. 3.370–400, 5.800–813. These and other passages are cited in Poliakoff 1987: 177n34.
 - 91 Pritchard 2012.
 - 92 Solon, Diod. Sic. *Bibl. Hist.* 9.2.5, Diog. Laert. 1.56; Eur. *Auto.*, quoted in Ath. 10.4 413c–414c and Diog. Laert. 1.56; indirect contrast between hunting and athletics, Xen. *Cyn.* 12; direct contrast with horsemanship, *Eq. mag.* 8; Epaminondas, Nep. *Epam.* 5.4, Plut. *Mor.* 192d.
 - 93 Ath. 14.25 628f.
 - 94 Gal. Ball.; see Poliakoff 1987: 16-17, 93-94.
 - 95 Poliakoff 1987: 101–104.
 - 96 Pl.: doubts about athletics as military training, *Rep.* 403e–404b; team war games, *Laws* 829e–831b. See Poliakoff 1987: 177n36. Sometimes Plato seems to assume the contrary attitude, though: see his analogy between military exercises and boxing and wrestling, *Laws* 830a–c.
 - 97 Judg 13:1–16:30.
 - 98 See Diod. Sic. Bibl. Hist. 17.100.8, 17.101.1.
 - 99 On the gymnasium itself as emblem of the hunting grounds see Sansone 1988.
- 100 On this general characteristic of nudity see Mouratidis 1985.
- 101 Pl. Tht. 144b.
- 102 Pl. Tht.: motion is rhoê, 152e; is being and life, 153a-c.
- 103 Pl. Tht.: Homer as general, 153a; peltasts, 165d.
- 104 Pl. Tht. 180a-b.
- 105 Thuc. 4.40.2.
- Rosivach (1999: 155–156) argues persuasively that the first Athenian slaves were Thracian, with significant numbers enslaved in the sixth century, i.e. before the advent of Athenian democracy.
- 107 Pl. Tht.: Thales and the Thracian, 174a; the mob as compared to the Thracian, 174c.

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8 You can tell a philosopher

Among the Indians there is the group of *gumnosophistai* [gymnosophists, naked wise men, naked intellectuals], who besides natural science also exert themselves in moral philosophy, and make their entire life a demonstration of virtue.

Philo Judaeus

Rags, which are the reproach of poverty, are the Beggar's robes, and graceful insignia of his profession, his tenure, his full dress, the suit in which he is expected to show himself in public. He is never out of the fashion, or limps awkwardly behind it. He is not required to put on court mourning. He wears all colors, fearing none. His costume has undergone less change than the Quaker's. He is the only man in the universe who is not obliged to study appearances. The ups and downs of the world concern him no longer. He alone continues in one stay ... He is the only free man in the universe.

Charles Lamb, "A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis" 1

The Cynic display of withdrawal

Paul Zanker's book on statues of poets, philosophers, and other intellectuals – already much drawn on in this book – leaves the impression that two philosophical types circulated the Mediterranean world in Greek and Roman antiquity. We see the gentleman-philosopher in his book, the freeborn solid citizen, in a tradition that begins with Plato; but also the Cynic, a recognizable type since Plato's younger contemporary Diogenes of Sinope. Zanker draws on a multitude of images in his study of ancient intellectuals, and he looks them over with close-up precision that makes it feel rash to challenge his readings.

And yet in one way this impression of two philosophical species (an impression encouraged by Zanker's book but not asserted in it) misdescribes the world that ancient philosophers lived in. Speaking of two species or two types implies parity between the ways of being a philosopher, when in fact the Cynic stands out. The Cynic even exists for the purpose of standing out, beyond socialization or sociability. The collected images in Zanker remind us that no one else, intellectual or not, played the misfit in the ancient world as the great oddball Cynics did. According to Diogenes Laertius, whose *Lives of the Eminent*

Philosophers devotes disproportionate space to this namesake of his, Diogenes of Sinope coined the term kosmopolitês "citizen of the world" to identify the Cynics' ideal of independence from all community. The ideal was liberationist not loyalist, not so much positive adherence to a global ethical creed and embrace of humanity's great universal community, although it is often read that way. The Cynics' cosmopolitanism is rather the negative release from loyalties, and freedom from any particular laws and customs.

Evidently the *kosmos* in question is the place outside every village, city, and empire. In a paradox suitable to Cynicism, the world has grown otherworldly. Any world you know is alien to Cynics, and they are aliens everywhere.

True to their expulsion from polite society, the Cynics dress as no one else did. They are the recognizable philosophers, thanks to a wardrobe guaranteed to make them look out of place no matter where they travel to: a *tribôn* "cloak" folded double and wrapped around the body; a *pêra* "leather pouch" hanging at their side to hold food; a walking stick or staff. Diogenes was said to have been the first to dress this way.⁴

A few centuries after Diogenes, the wardrobe had apparently become the Cynic norm, considering that Lucian, a Greek author writing under Roman rule, described the outfit in *Biôn Prasis* "Ways-of-Life Sale" as standard Cynic garb.⁵ And Philostratus, who lived after Lucian, told of a latter-day Cynic's follower, Menippus, who when asked what he owned could name only the *tribôn* he wore.⁶

In another work Lucian (or pseudo-Lucian if that work is spurious) emphasizes the Cynic's filthiness and beggarly look. But to members of the school their simplified clothing evoked heroism. A letter attributed to Diogenes, probably written not by him but by another Cynic in support of their group, says, "Consider the ragged cloak to be a lion's skin, the staff a club ... For thus would the spirit of Heracles ... stir in you."

Another letter, this one purporting to have been written by Diogenes to his father, distinguishes the Cynic's way of dress from what everyone else does with clothing. "Do not be upset, Father," the would-be Diogenes says, "that I ... put on a double, coarse cloak, carry a wallet over my shoulders, and have a staff in my hand ... living as I do, not in conformity with popular opinion but according to nature."

In the hands of the Cynics a garment comes close to being a uniform for philosophers. Uniforms escape fashion; they also let themselves be read. "The Cynic attire carried rhetorical and philosophical significance. It became the outward appearance of *autarkeia* [self-sufficiency]; it stood for pauperism for the sake of freedom, self-sufficiency, and contempt for convention." What matters most on this conception of Cynicism is that clothing possess an intrinsic meaning, rather than derive its meaning from what the whims of the public might dictate (that one color is aristocratic, another one manly). Because the pouch-and-cloak carried the fixed significance it did, it found widespread use until late in antiquity. During the first century of the Roman Empire, Dio Chrysostom would write of adopting beggarly clothes upon becoming a Cynic; 11 centuries

later, early Christian historians still alluded to the philosophical cloak, sometimes with great approval. 12

The costumed condition of the Cynic also explains his availability as the template for eccentric sages. Any philosopher who lived unusually could be assimilated to the form of the Cynic. Thus the Indian philosophers, whom the Greeks heard about in the wake of Alexander's campaign through Pakistan and into the subcontinent, an expedition that took place after the founding of the Cynic movement. Stories about these wise men of the far east appear in Plutarch's Life of Alexander and in the Alexander Romance, but also in other accounts of India now lost, preserved in fragments cited by later authors.

The Indians in question are typically called "gymnosophists" naked wise men. Richard Stoneman observes that the Alexander Romance stresses the men's nudity. Philo Judaeus and (later) Plutarch and Clement of Alexandria refer to them as gumnosophistai; Arrian speaks of the naked intellectuals of Taxila, and Diogenes Laertius calls these figures influences on the Greek atomist philosopher Democritus (who was contemporary with Socrates). 13 A key early source is Onesicritus, whom Strabo summarizes, along with the author Megasthenes, in his own compilation of known facts about the Indians. Strabo reports both on wise Indians who wear clothes made from the bark of trees and - following Onesicritus – on those who sit naked. These latter figures resemble Cynics in the unconventionality of their lives. One finds them living outside a city, eating uncooked food, having sexual relations in pragmatic ways for procreation alone, and engaging powerful rulers in nearly flippant conversation. 15 Some historical fact may lie behind the preserved testimonies - Alexander might indeed have met philosophers native to India – but the kernel of truth has been overlaid with Cynic detail. 16

The moral of the story is that for sages to be recognized as such in foreign lands, they must bear the kinds of markers they do at home (even if properly speaking they have no home), very much including a costume no one else would choose. This is the Cynics' legacy, and its obvious appeal lies in its appealing obviousness. The display of withdrawal is as memorable as it is apparently oxymoronic. You can always tell a Cynic, even if you can't tell him much.

The limits of philosophical costume

As obvious as the appeal of the Cynics' uniform should be its potential for letting the Cynics down. It fails as an identifying mark too easily, in that nothing prevents a fraud or pretender from using the official dress to masquerade as a Cynic, and to gain the prestige of the sage illegitimately.

Lucian raises the objection in its classical form in Death of Peregrinus. Peregrinus the antihero is a recidivist fraud and imposter. He bamboozles Christians into believing he is one of them, and once among them he profits from their adulation and their material help. Then he puts on a dirty cloak and hangs a leather pouch at his side, and with a staff in his hand he has made himself a

Cynic.¹⁷ The outfit is a joke now. Couldn't anyone at all who wanted to do so pose as a philosopher just by dressing the part?

Thoreau writes – in the same chapter of *Walden* that complains about fashion – "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers." It is a familiar rebuke even if it continues to sting, but it can accuse the unconventional Cynics as much as it does the conventionalized bourgeois faculty member. Wearing a folded-over blanket and a pouch is a profession of philosophy too, a claim that the person you see will be thinking in a certain way and then living in accord with those thoughts. The outfit certainly makes for the same disappointment as professorial philosophy. When any philosopher proves to be careless, too worldly, too vain or too cruel, professional credentials come under fire. What purports to identify a philosopher also permits deception. If it is not Peregrinus's variety of fraudulence then it could still be a mismatch between the promise of an idealized personage walking the earth, and the mundane pedestrian person before you. Even without an act of fraud, possessing credentials then feels like a deception.

The Cynics have an answer available to them, the same answer that comes from any representative of an unorthodox way of life. If you think this looks easy, you haven't worked very hard at figuring the cost of such a life. You thought you had imagined walking the earth but you only imagined imagining it. A costume is the beginning. The Cynic renounced home, family, and all civilized comfort. He did not merely dress in *atopos* "absurd, eccentric" clothing but also made himself *atopos* and always far from home.

Wandering marked the Cynics in much the way that India's wise men occupy a grove outside the city. The Cynics cast themselves as heirs to a tradition of philosophical wanderers. They treated Anacharsis the legendary Scythian as a Cynic precursor, foregrounding his foreign accent when they wrote about him. This non-Greek Anacharsis, known for explaining Mediterranean culture, set a precedent for Cynics to follow: the perpetual foreigner. This kind of wanderer is not the traveler, or the one who wanders as Odysseus did, en route to arriving back home in the end. The Cynics lived as peregrinators who had no destination in mind and none they wished for. Ancient sources have Diogenes describing himself as "citiless, homeless, deprived of fatherland, beggar, wanderer." Silvia Montiglio says in her study of Greek wandering, "This is the first time that a philosopher proudly embraces the figure of the homeless wanderer."

It might give the Cynics more intellectual credibility that along with no home to lay their heads they also had no intellectual home. The version of Diogenes who speaks in Lucian's *Ways-of-Life Sale* denies the need for education in philosophy. That is a satirist's caricature talking, but the most popular stories about Diogenes pit him against organized philosophy – in the person of Plato and Plato's school – as if to draw the same moral. Besides the Platonic definition of the human that gets him walking into the Academy with a counterexample chicken, there is the story of Diogenes' telling Plato that he sees tables and cups but no *idea* "Form, Idea" of table-ness or cup-ness. 23

On one popular view of the stories, "the Cynic battle is against disembodied theory."²⁴ But Plato hardly seems disembodied in the anecdotes from Diogenes Laertius that characterize him as gluttonous, extravagant, a tyrant's lickspittle.²⁵ The Cynic's chicken among the students in the Academy suggests a rivalry or misfit not between theory and body, but between established philosophy philosophy carried out in a school building – and the free-ranging thinker who makes, himself, a counterexample to official teachings. Wearing only the foldedover cloak that lacks the feathers polite society decorates itself with, Diogenes wanders among doctrines as among cities, stopping each time long enough to put the doctrine in its place but not long enough to make it his place.²⁶

In fact it comes as a surprise to find the principal Cynics credited with dialogues of their own. Any systematic philosophy they did write was lost long ago; and that is not even the real cause of the surprise. To a number of observers the Cynics fail a crucial test for philosophers to live by, in that although they follow a code they do not live according to rigorous and rational investigation of that code. They do not reason their way through to a theoretical conception of life and human behavior and then allow that theory to move and steer their practice.²⁷

It must be agreed that this is a high bar to clear. Even within what you may call the theoretical paradigm of modern professional philosophy, we recognize both "positive" activities, like working out an account of perception or of moral reasoning, and "negative" or "critical" philosophizing that finds errors in other people's accounts without developing views to replace them with. One might be the work of the complete philosopher, the other one practiced by a supplementary figure, but we treat both as having and using reason in the service of philosophy. In these terms the Cynic has a counterpart in today's philosophy department just as Stoics and Peripatetics do.

By one measure the Cynics even live up to the title of "philosopher" better than anyone else does. This is the Pythagorean measure, or it claims to be. The Cynics' wanderings among cities and doctrines render them the most vivid illustration of what Pythagoras purportedly said about the philosopher going about as a spectator. And the Cynics' spectatorship goes to the heart of their choice of uniform, a choice that begins by rejecting any choices about dress that organized societies have thus far made.

Chapter 4 already cited Karen Hanson on philosophers' traditional rejection of fashion; she locates the sources of that rejection in (among other motives) the philosophical urge to watch and know.²⁸ The thought bears repeating. Philosophers must be pure spectators not accepting being looked at by anyone else. Thus their resistance to fashion is a denial of their own passivity. "Philosophers define themselves as the lovers of wisdom, not the beloved. They are the cognizers, and their purest professional aim is to know, not to be known, to think, not to be thought about."29

Hanson's sizing-up fits the Cynics exactly. Always ready to leave town, they claim the position of perpetual observers. Consider the most famous of all Diogenes' stories, in which he walks through the city burning a lamp in daylight, "I seek a man." The anecdote is misquoted to have him say "an honest

man," a gentler punch line and one that does not invite the question that the actual punch line brings to mind. Why doesn't he see himself with that lamp? Diogenes is not being modest about his own humanity. He is not looking elsewhere for the reason that he considers himself unworthy of inclusion in the species. Something like the extreme opposite is going on. He considers himself worthy of judging the species as a whole. The city is thronged with so-called humans, but Diogenes hasn't seen the real thing yet. And looking is an act in which he can take only an active part. He is not looking at himself.

When it comes to assessing human beings, the kind of activity that denies all passivity calls for the observer to stand outside the species. The Cynics alienate themselves, making themselves aliens or foreigners everywhere.

In Chapter 4 I argued that the philosopher's conception of existing fashion makes one's fellow citizens into the imitators of a dastardly foreign fashion-monger. The influence of that Parisian monkey on Thoreau's fellow Americans left them all pining to be French, and himself the only real American left; somewhat (with all allowances for the differences that result from intervening millennia) as the philosophical headman that Socrates sketches in the *Theaetetus*, the *koruphaios* among philosophers, occupies a city that he treats as his hometown, though for all he knows he is there alone, the lone citizen.

The philosopher's complaint about imitative compatriots is not quite a contradiction. Logically speaking nothing prevents both metaphors' operating at once, so that fashion-loving foreigners send new clothing styles in over the border while the other foreigner, the philosopher, constantly plans a getaway. After all there can be more than one foreigner in a place and even more than one type of foreigner. But the rhetoric does grow jumbled. The philosopher stands opposed to the mass of herded regular citizens who are in turn opposed again by the outsider who invents new styles of clothing.

In the end, the philosopher's difference from the fashion-making foreigner is left unclear. And yet no difference should register more sharply than that one.

Hanson's sense of the philosopher as non-assimilative and spectative is right-minded. The metaphor only calls for judicious handling; for if in some respects Plato's impractical philosopher in the *Theaetetus* digression is a stranger among his own fellow citizens, Plato also blames those others for the estrangement. The non-philosopher citizens are the ones who can't dress as free men do. They could be animals, for all the philosopher can tell. Despite the distance he is highly conscious of between himself and and his city's other people, the philosopher does not belong in another city. At most what he needs is another version, an improved interpretation of, the city that already exists.

In short it is very much as if the *koruphaios* were the only native, surrounded by a city full of foreigners – a situation as fantastical as the proverbial city of slaves with a single free occupant. In any ordinary sense such images are impossible, but they permit Hanson's observation to continue holding – the philosopher stands apart from the general population – while also protecting the philosopher from a status, as foreigner, that those condemnations of fashion would not want to be committed to.

Platonic philosophical nudity

At first glance the Cynics emerge from the comparison as more rigorous than the members of the Academy. The Cynics are the true cosmopolitans; Plato looks parochial. They left home and declined the comforts to be found in existing cities. He locked himself in though the city disappeared, like a curmudgeonly last occupant of a ghost town who still insists on referring to the town's old neighborhoods as if they had never been abandoned. In this spirit, the change from the Platonic philosopher's well-oiled nudity and well-draped gentlemanly cloak to the blanket and bare feet of Cynicism can read as progress away from the conformist pressures that we are conscious of today as the demands of fashion, and toward a freedom that is the symbol of free thinking.

It is true that Plato does not present himself or philosophy as rootless. He characterized the sophists as merchants to remind his readers that they were the wanderers, most of them arriving in Athens as non-citizens and civic non-participants. We already saw that the Socrates of Plato's dialogues did not leave Athens. In fact the *Symposium*, which idealizes Socrates without limit, says he really philosophizes while standing still, which you might call the vanishing point of a yen for travel. Whatever sympathies may exist between Socrates and the Cynics – and the sympathies and resemblances must have existed, enough to warrant Plato's half-praise of Diogenes as "a Socrates gone mad" – the similarity does not extend to dressing like a tramp or tramping without address.

The Platonic philosopher's nudity (which I find decisively different from the nudity of the Indian gymnosophists) contains a feature of sociability that is missing from the Cynics' variety of uniforms, or rather a feature that the Cynics have excluded from their acts of dressing. I said following Hanson that the Cynics fit a conception of philosophy as active, pathologically active, so that they know without being known – they see invisibly – therefore also dressing as if they were one more unaccounted-for foreigner. But in the recurring Platonic image of philosophical costume, the philosopher's nudity, that costume is the precondition for both activity and passivity, therefore possibly a condition for engagement in a social world in which one both acts and is acted upon.

What Socrates tells Theodorus makes this point. Nudity in wrestling is the condition for active engagement, and it lets the body be inspected. The Spartans would not permit Theodorus to stand inspecting other men's bodies but would have required him to strip, be seen, and engage in competitive wrestling. Stripping means both *allous theômenous gumnous* "viewing others naked" and *autos ... ante-pideiknunai to eidos* "to exhibit your own form in turn." A philosophy for which wrestling is a metaphor must likewise be an engagement containing the opportunity for both active and passive roles for all participants.

The non-philosopher, who in this metaphorical realm ranks as low as a slave does, again would find no place in what philosophers do. As literal slaves are barred from participation in the gymnasium, so too metaphorical slaves presumably could not gain entry to the metaphorical gymnasium or appear in the metaphorical nudity that is a condition for metaphorical wrestling.

As Chapter 7 already said, nudity reads as the condition for being inspected in the *Gorgias*'s eschatological myth. Inasmuch as philosophy makes a good state of soul possible for those being inspected, you could say that the philosopher's is the soul best suited to being stripped. But this makes for an attenuated connection between philosophy as such and nudity as such. Anyway it takes the passivity of the nude too far, for the souls in this story are not there to *do* anything, certainly not to philosophize in their naked state. They are here to be looked at, known, and judged, and nothing else.

The *Charmides* brings nudity squarely into philosophy. Maybe it should be said to bring philosophical practice straight to the existing forms of nudity. In a passage from early in that dialogue, Chaerephon is speaking to Socrates with some excitement. He is the impetuous type – in Plato's *Apology* he's the friend who went to Delphi to ask whether anyone was wiser than Socrates³³ – but surely he restrained himself in the temple of Apollo, waiting for a sign that identifies the true philosopher, as he does not attempt to do in this wrestling room.

"How does the young man look to you, Socrates? Isn't his face beautiful?" "Supernaturally," I said.

"But if he chose to strip," he said, "his face would be nothing. That's how absolutely beautiful his form [eidos] is" ...

And I said, "I'll agree that the man is unsurpassed -if he should happen to have only one more little quality."

"What?" asked Critias.

"If his soul [psuchê] happen to be naturally good," I said ... "Shouldn't we undress this very part of him [ouk apedusamen autou auto touto] and look at it first before we see his shape? For he has matured to a point where he would want to discourse."

"Oh yes indeed," Critias said, "because he is a philosopher."34

Understanding the soul entails an undressing that philosophy is best able, or possibly alone is able, to administer.

Despite the similarity of setting between *Charmides* and *Theaetetus*, their calls to strip and philosophize differ in an essential element. The *Theaetetus* makes philosophy a naked practice secondarily. The nudity of philosophy follows from its athleticism. Other dialogues likewise reinforce that metaphor, even if philosophy-as-athletics makes it a matter of learning and acculturation rather than (as it is in the *Theaetetus* when Socrates ribs Theodorus) combative. Wrestling is synecdoche for education in Plato's *Laws* and *Meno*; the *Lysis*, as befits its own setting in a *palaistra*, contains plentiful references to philosophy as wrestling. But this portion of conversation in the *Charmides* uses the vocabulary of knowledge and beauty, seeing a body and knowing a soul, in neither case necessarily because there will be wrestling or any other sport. In the *Charmides* the philosopher's nudity, nudity that Chapter 7 associated with inspection and visibility, must allow for or risk passivity; and with passivity engagement or

inclusion, philosophy becoming a sociable enterprise even in spite of its impulses toward unsociability.

Even the unusual imagery of agôn and athleticism in Plato's Euthydemus has more to do with being seen and known than with learning or winning. Nudity reaches a brutal extreme in the Euthydemus, which is yet another dialogue set in a gymnasium that makes combat sport a metaphor for philosophical exchange. Falls and near-falls mark the progress of this dialogue's arguments, even if Dionysodorus and Euthydemus are sharp-logicked sophists, overwhelmingly negative in their dialectic, therefore less disposed to enacting philosophy as sociable give-and-take.³⁵

Soon the language goes beyond words suited to civilized wrestling. Socrates volunteers to undergo the magical sophistry, comparing himself to a "Carian slave" (one proverbially thrust into harm's way³⁶) and then to old Pelias, whose daughters Medea tricked into chopping the old man up and boiling him. "Being an old man," Socrates says, "I am ready to run the risk and surrender myself to this Dionysodorus as if to Medea of Colchis. Let him destroy me – if he wants he can boil me, he can do what he likes, only finally display me as good."³⁷

They will not be wrestling. Medea had tricked the daughters of Pelias into chopping him up and boiling him. She did that to an old ram and brought a rejuvenated lamb out of the pot. Socrates is either a disposable foreigner to be commanded at will (Carian) or a superannuated sheep; in either case not eligible to participate in Greek athletics.

To this offer from Socrates young Ctesippus responds with his own. "I am ready to turn myself over to the strangers [xenois] too – to skin me [derein] if they want, even more than they're skinning me now, if my hide does not end up shaped into a wineskin [askos], as Marsyas's was, but into virtue." Apollo flayed the satyr Marsyas alive, then hung the askos "skin" in the marketplace of Kelaina, a city in Phrygia. 39

Where one of Socrates' analogies put him in an animal's place and the other made him a barbaros, Ctesippus's single analogy does both at once, turning him into a non-Greek non-human. The cross-examination he faces from Dionysodorus and Euthydemus remains outside the sets of meanings appropriate to civilized Greeks' encounters with one another. So there is some truth in what Sara Rappe says about this passage: "Shedding one's skin is a metaphor that continues the wrestling images often associated with paideia in the Platonic dialogues"; 40 only not quite enough truth, because these sophists are not practicing what Plato would recognize as paideia "education, acculturation." But Rappe is right that the flaying takes the wrestling another step further, inasmuch as it extrapolates and exaggerates the nudity that would have accompanied a wrestling match. The supernakedness of losing your skin in a conversation reminds you that you have already lost your shirt. A flaying works as supernudity not by making a young man look beautiful, nor by improving his competitiveness as stripping was said to help Olympic runners go faster, but because nudity exposes the athlete to full view. Marsyas significantly had his

skin peeled off to leave his flesh open to inspection from every side, and then hung as an empty skin for indefinite posthumous inspection. What Ctesippus risks, according to his own figure of speech, is total exposure; what he hopes for is exposure as virtuous, but he understands that one way or another the entry into combative dialectic will leave him seen and known.

Platonic anti-fashion

As difficult as the Cynics' life may be to practice, it is easier to understand than the Platonic alternative, which verges on the fantastical. One can imagine a philosopher's uniform that makes its wearer peculiar to all observers. The idiosyncratic costume of the Cynic accomplishes that much, and its idiosyncrasy gave it a lasting function in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. Dressed to flout every conventional fashion, the Cynics made themselves peculiar, removed from their fellow citizens wherever they traveled.

The nudity that Plato seeks to appropriate as philosophical does not read as peculiar in the Cynics' sense. Greek nudity was not, and knew itself not to be, the unveiled condition of a mother goddess or other divinity, the sight of which released primal forces that civilization could not resist. But it was also not the condition of human innocence, now specially associated with Adam and Eve, an infantile state before civilization. The Greeks could imagine that natural condition without knowing about Adam: Plato's own *Protagoras* finds that sophist telling an imaginative history of the first human beings, naked and shoeless, before Prometheus starts them along the path to technology and collective living. For those shivering creatures, as for the contented ones in Eden, nakedness means that civilization has not yet begun. Divine nakedness stands outside civilization and could bring it to an end. Greek naked practices differ from both of those more familiar phenomena, standing right in the heart of civilization.

And yet, even while deriving its legitimacy from social norms for dress, nudity in Greece laid claim to a justification from outside the domain of the social. This is the feature of nudity that marks it specially as anti-fashion. The other marks of anti-fashion also apply to Greek nudity: the origin in religious ritual, the masculine associations, the signification of human equality. Still, what stands out in most anti-fashion, and among the naked Greeks, is the justification a culture gives to its own selected ways of dress. With some insistence the Greeks sought to prove that their custom was grounded in more than convention or tradition. (Thus no ancient source suggests that nudity might derive from initiation rites. By the classical era the Greeks knew that religious rites began in nomos not phusis, convention not nature, and a ritual beginning for nudity gainsaid its superiority.) Nudity laid claim to a justification from outside the domain of the social. It may have differed absolutely from a fertility mother's bareness, or a primitive man's ignorance of fabric, but it never ceased to call those nudities to mind.

Among modern anti-fashions, the one that appeals to natural justifications most overtly is the wardrobe color black. And in the case of black we note first

that as the "absence of color," black purports to be, thanks to the laws of physics, what all objects look like apart from their being perceived by creatures with our retinal apparatus. It would be what things are like without secondary qualities, or what they are naturally like. Second, consider that, as the absence of colored clothing, black garments intimate the absence of clothing as such, thus arriving by another avenue at the always signified, naturally justified condition of nudity.

But I have already commented on anti-fashion as doubly motivated: from all sides, justified as one way of dress among others; from outside, or vertically, justified on natural grounds as that which differs from mere ways of dress. The antifashion has to be visible both on the assumption of inside knowledge and without such assumptions, being visibly among cognoscenti the insider's outfit but also intelligibly to all the rest as something people wear.

In the context of Plato and the Cynics – Plato against the Cynics: Plato as he might feel moved to defend himself against their unconventionality as the truth for philosophy - the double-edged account of anti-fashion replies to the Cynic's challenge. Given how anti-fashion conceives itself, it can refuse to yield ground to the Cynic, not even conceding that the Cynic's costume can boast of any basis that the Academician's costume lacks. Whether the reply finally makes sense or fails to, whether "anti-fashion" describes a paradoxical reality or just another fantasy posing as paradox, this is the name for the possibility of the philosopher. Philosophers dress as proper citizens and as free human beings because they are both. The Platonic philosopher is the exemplary human in both the normative and non-normative senses of "exemplary," being an example on the one hand (utterly unremarkable) and setting an example on the other (standing out, inspiring), the true example of the species toward which the Cynic stands as counterexample.

As nudity of the soul, which is symbolized better by bodily nudity than by anything else – assuming that this is a *symbolizing* kind of bodily nudity, not just the bare animal condition of the human but the human form understood as something that means something (signals, indicates) - understood this way, Platonic philosophy seeks to be an anti-fashion of human discourse. As other kinds of discourse do, it belongs in a culture and trades words with its compatriots. But it is also incommensurable with the others, philosophy having an origin that no (existing) culture can account for. Philosophy began, after all, when the ocean did, and it begins as rainbows do, outlandishly.

It has been this book's argument that Plato sensed the anti-fashion in his culture's uses of nudity and therefore appropriated nudity for use by philosophy. Let the other ways of speaking and writing change with the times, as poetry does (though not the best poetry, at that), and let that language move the crowd as rhetoric does. Tragedy may dress its thoughts in showy diction and rhetoric like a heavy cosmetic cover may doll up a homely idea to seduce the unwary. Philosophy is the naked body of thought, only attractive when rigorous dialectical exercise has sculpted it into shape, for it has no recourse to fancy clothes that might hide its defects. Philosophy has returned itself to nature

while still speaking in the city. The natural effect of soul nudity means that philosophy sees what the interlocutor is all about, as opposed to existing rhetoric which has not been grounded in knowledge of souls, and tragedy whose multiplicity of characters allows the author's own soul to remain hidden.⁴²

Thoreau

Bringing the question of dress back closer to the present, I return to Thoreau, who joined together several features of philosophy's disgruntlement with fashion in the long first chapter of *Walden*. We find fashion's imitativeness there, and its way of turning fellow citizens into foreigners; and in general the fact that a philosopher would keep himself hearkening to the Fates instead of to these modern cloth makers. "The philosopher ... is not fed, sheltered, clothed, warmed, like his contemporaries."

In that earlier part of the chapter Thoreau does not specify what the difference in clothing might consist in. He observes that "the New Hollander [i.e. the native Australian] goes naked with impunity, while the European shivers in his clothes." And he will wonder, when reflecting on the anti-fashionist goal of human equality:

It is an interesting question how far men would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes. Could you, in such a case, tell surely of any company of civilized men which belonged to the most respected class?⁴³

The philosopher is a man who might well put on nothing at all.

Rousseau had imagined such a thing, when he began *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* with a distinction between true philosophy and "the title of philosopher," proclaiming in the same paragraph that "the good man is an athlete who likes to fight naked [nu]." But Thoreau has something more practical in mind:

[O]ur shirts are our liber, or true bark, which cannot be removed without girdling and so destroying the man. I believe that all races at some seasons wear something equivalent to the shirt. It is desirable that a man be clad so simply that he can lay his hands on himself in the dark ...

The shirt belongs to all cultures rather than rendering one culture ridiculous in the eyes of the other, as those costumes did that shipwrecked sailors found on the beach. The shirt is universal or standard, growing on human bodies naturally, like bark on a tree — therefore *true*, true to the human, and for that reason facilitating something akin to self-knowledge. You cannot know the shape of your own body if you baffle it with pleats and pads. Lay hands on yourself and you will know something even when it is dark out. The shirt bears a close relation to the unclothed body, as anti-fashions do. Being bark it comes off (unlike fancy dress) only with trouble and dangerously. The shirt as Thoreau describes it stands apart by virtue of being an article of clothing that everyone wears:

generic clothing, clothing as such. This is why it sometimes suggests undress, as in No Exit, whose Estelle is damned to hell but still will not tolerate the sight of a man in shirt sleeves.⁴⁵

Finishing his sentence about the value of this simple garment, Thoreau hangs the shirt on the shoulders of the figure who represents the opposite of the fashionable.

It is desirable that a man be clad so simply ... and that he live in all respects so compactly and preparedly that, if an enemy take the town, he can, like the old philosopher, walk out the gate empty-handed without anxiety.⁴⁶

The essential, universal garment and instrument of self-knowledge is what a philosopher wears.

The most obvious reference for Thoreau's "old philosopher" is Diogenes of Sinope. Some affinity between Thoreau and Diogenes was noticed long ago. One of Walden's early reviewers, Charles Frederick Briggs, titled his review "A Yankee Diogenes" and invoked the Cynic several times. 47 "A Yankee Diogenes is a lusus," a freak of nature. Thoreau manifests "a true vagabondish disposition" reminiscent of that ancient sect, Briggs says, even if he does conclude that Thoreau "is not much of a cynic." And passages like the one just quoted, about the old philosopher of simplified life, are enough to account for Briggs's comparison. If that personage is someone real from history it may well be Diogenes or one of the other Cynics who were always ready to leave home without regret, whatever town they were in.

Even so, Briggs is right to distinguish Thoreau from the Cynics. Thoreau's costume for philosophers rather tries to respond, as Plato's did, to the opposite pressures on philosophers: to stand apart but also to typify. The shirt is therefore more Platonic than Diogenic. What Thoreau imagines is not a utopia in which (as for the kosmopolitês) another world exists for the philosopher to occupy, but rather a manner of occupying the known world without defeat or desperation.

The lone native among an alienated public is meant to be remarkable and yet characteristic of the species, and characteristic of what the species can be. The Cynic works hard at standing apart but turns freakish. You can read the meaning of the Cynic costume, but only as one reads a foreign term that sits in the language untranslated. The exemplary philosopher unlike the Cynic feels no obligation to flee into homelessness. This philosopher's charge, which Thoreau attends to in his homemaking at Walden Pond, is rather to inspire the nearby near-citizens to end their own estrangement from knowledge about themselves, which is self-knowledge about potentially perfected selves - an estrangement they had not been aware of;48 to make themselves at home in a way they had not known was possible, rather than only to leave the only home they know.

How far any anti-fashion succeeds at embracing both nature and custom is not the question. My point has been to observe one impulse within fashion that opposed fashion not by urging its eradication but by aspiring to transcend fashion, and to arrive at once-religious uniforming.

And if Plato's *Theaetetus* does open at this or that seam to show the Academy in the act of being founded, and the anxiety that every Academic would have experienced – how to carry on as that anti-institutionalist Socrates did while also carrying on as an institution? – then I may have been justified in claiming to see signs in that dialogue of an answer, a still-tense answer, something provisional in Plato's day and still provisional now: philosophy apart but also at home, outside the city and alive in the heart of it, accordingly dressed in the one remarkable way that said "civilization at its best" and also feigned ignorance of civilization. For those philosophers who occupy a gymnasium without irony, the setting suggests a doubled existence, one that contains the hovering danger of falling back into the known world, though also the promise of not having to face trial by a jury of non-peers.

Kierkegaard

When Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling measures the distance between two exemplary figures, the one who lives in infinite resignation, the knight of resignation, and the Christian knight of faith, the book's concern to understand religious inwardness introduces an agenda unknown to either Plato or the Cynics. The faith that Fear and Trembling seeks could not have been the goal of anyone who knew Socrates. And yet a difference is at stake between Kierkegaard's knights that also existed in that earlier context, between one model human being who stands out from all others and one who makes himself indistinguishable from humans taken generally; the latter understood as one for whom being exemplary requires harmonizing with a larger human world, and thus does not set an example so much as he is one.

Whether the knight of faith is imaginable is a question every reader of *Fear and Trembling* has to decide. Does the book's heartbreaking joke consist in its having defined faith so rigorously as to make it vanish from the earth? Johannes de Silentio the pseudonymous author identifies Abraham as a model of faith; the question is then how to find Abraham's followers in a modern European city, hence in modernity.

Going back before modernity, "Problema III" in *Fear and Trembling* gives the monastery the credit it's due for having once served as the place Christians went to in order to leave the world. "And what higher movement has the age discovered, now that entering the monastery has been abandoned?" In more than one respect the monastery carried on the role of the ancient Academy. But the assumption driving *Fear and Trembling* is that something decisive took place in the modern age that rendered this version of life in faith unavailable.

What becomes of the man who in an earlier time would have entered a monastery and understood himself as a member of its society? The knight of faith translates the old demand on Christians, that they make sense within some community, into a new and absolute expectation of ordinariness. The Christians' task had always been to live a life suited to humanity; this now means not pretending to a status or wardrobe above their fellow citizens'. "Externally,"

the chapter "Preliminary Expectoration" says about faithful Christians, "they had a striking resemblance to bourgeois philistinism."51 This is not to say they live as philistines admirous of modern mass culture. It is enough if they let themselves be mistaken for philistines. So the knight of faith "is solid all the way through ... no spruced-up burgher walking out to Fresberg on a Sunday afternoon treads the earth more solidly."52

As the knight of faith walks home (for that is where his solid steps carry him), he pictures the meal his wife has cooked. Tonight it will be lamb's head with vegetables.⁵³ As he resembled a regular Joe in his chats with friends and strangers, the knight even fantasizes as regular Joes do. He only differs from them in feeling just as happy when he walks in the door and finds no special meal waiting.⁵⁴

Kierkegaard's example veers away from the wife as soon as she appears with no special food on the table. The knight of faith comes home – and what does he say to her? "I had convinced myself that you'd cooked me a lamb's head with vegetables, something savory beyond imagining, I would have thrown myself upon that food. But I'm every bit as happy with these boiled potatoes." Is such a speech possible? To confess his religious joy would be to cheat on it, expelling himself from the inwardness of his own faith. Presumably therefore nothing about the knight betrays his steady steps in faith, even to the little lady. He remains as unknown to his wife as he did to the strangers he talked to walking home. He has no intimates. God knows him intimately, and that's all he needs.

For such reasons the knight of faith does not experience the fellowship that had been possible in monasteries or, before them, possible among the philosophers Socrates describes in the Theaetetus. "Partnership [Compagniskalb] in such areas is utterly unthinkable."55 His turn toward God turns him away from all other humans. Indeed what makes this man a genuine knight of faith is his "absolute isolation [Isolation]."56 The society that Socrates' koruphaios philosopher had been able to achieve among like-minded thinkers is now only possible between the knight of faith and God. In his new way he enacts the version of dialogue that the Theaetetus describes as, so to speak, the limiting case of philosophical companionship, when Socrates calls thinking a logos that the soul holds with itself "about whatever it beholds ... The soul in thinking is doing no more than dialoguing with itself."57 This inward exchange has come to be the only one that the knight of faith knows.

The resemblance might feel stretched if it involved only Kierkegaard's appropriating the personification of established philosophy. But in this move to Christian concerns the scenario retains the same excluded figure. This book has dwelt on the contrast between a philosopher radically different from other humans but alone capable of discovering that difference, and the ancient Cynic who has pledged to make his difference plain to all. This contrast survives in Fear and Trembling thanks to the ties between the Cynic and the philosophical knight of infinite resignation who has renounced it all. "The knights of the infinite resignation are easily recognizable – their walk is light and bold."58

They have a walk that does not share in the solidity of the other knight's tread. You might ask whether they experience the same attachment to the earth's mass as regular people. For this reason the resigned heroes appear to be far away, wherever they are, and *Fear and Trembling* can speak of "that distant and aristocratic nature by which the knight of the infinite is recognized." ⁵⁹

To recognize a distant and aristocratic nature is to see something opposite to the plebeian neighbor the knight of faith. A distant nature brings the peregrinating Cynic to mind. Even that word "aristocratic" points to something about how one spots a Cynic. Sometimes aristocrats are opulent, recognized for their flashiness, but remember de Silentio's setting both knights apart from the showy life of bourgeois philistinism, "which infinite resignation, like faith, deeply disdains." What makes this knight aristocratic and therefore a Cynic is his visibility.

As Thoreau would do a decade later,⁶¹ Kierkegaard dresses his wandering philosopher in a Cynic's undergarment. "Infinite resignation is that shirt [*Skjorte*] mentioned in an old legend."⁶² In the folktale being alluded to, "Erzsi, the Spinner Girl," a brutal crusader kidnaps a girl and forces her to spin a shirt out of flax that will make him invulnerable.⁶³ The magic of the shirt derives from the suffering that went into making it. The knight who surrenders everything will then be able to live untouched by catastrophe. "The thread is spun with tears, bleached with tears; the shirt is sewn with tears – but then it also gives protection better than iron or steel."⁶⁴

According to de Silentio, the spinner girl legend does not go far enough. "The secret in life is that each person must sew it himself," transfer of the magical shirt striking Kierkegaard as akin to a transfer of tears. You cannot do my weeping for me, and you cannot give me the peace that requires my own act of renunciation. The Cynics in the same spirit called the blanket they wrapped around them their lion skin of Heracles. The skin of the Nemean lion was as invulnerable as armor, but if anyone other than a Cynic wore a blanket it would only be a blanket. The Cynics abandoned civilized desires and thereby got the protection from an old bolt of wool that other people would need a magical garment to provide for them.

That the difference between human lives should persist into modernity and under the sun of a new religion suggests a tension that will not ease. In words the tension appears as the doubleness of exemplarity – *being* an example but also *setting* one. In a philosopher's biography the tension demands attention to two tasks simultaneously: being an example by taking your place in a philosophy that already began, and setting an example by beginning philosophizing, thus living remarkably, as if in the belief that philosophy and the culture that gives rise to it not only began once but retain their capacity to begin, even now.

Notes

- 1 Philo Every Good 74; Lamb 1882: par. 10.
- 2 Diog. Laert. 6.63.
- 3 See e.g. Navia 1996: 102.

- 4 Diog. Laert. 6.22.
- 5 Lucian Vit. auct. Literally "sale of lives," the title Biôn Prasis is more often known as Philosophies for Sale or Sale of Creeds, a bios "life" or "way of life" being the product of one or another school's teaching. The work is a satirical dialogue surveying the major philosophical schools known around the Roman Empire and competing for recruits. On Cynicism, Vit. auct. §§8–11. The Cynic comes from "the world," being as he is tou kosmou politês "citizen of the world" (8). He wears a cloak meant to symbolize the lion skin of Heracles (8).
- 6 Philostr. VA 4.25. I am grateful to Heather Reid for pointing me to the remarkable tale in question, as well as for other choice facts and passages.
- 7 Lucian *Cyn.* 1, 5, 17.
- 8 "Diog." 26 [Crat.], in Malherbe 1977.
- 9 "Diog." 7 [Hacet.], in Malherbe 1977. The "wallet" in this quotation is a word often used to translate *pêra*, the leather sack suitable for carrying food.
- 10 Bosman 2006.
- 11 Discourses 13.10–11; see Malherbe 1977: 103–104.
- 12 Eusebius wrote Ecclesiastical History in the fourth century. He quotes Origen's reference to a Christian named Heraclas who wore the philosopher's cloak (Euseb. Hist. eccl. 6.19). He speaks in his own voice, with praise, of Justin Martyr, a Christian en philosophou schêmati "in philosopher's garb" (4.11). The Greek schêma "shape" had become standard nomenclature for the clothes in which philosophers presented themselves. A report from the following century tells of the inflammatory pagan orator Olympius, in Alexandria, who stirred pagans up against Christians "dressed in the garment of a philosopher" (Sozom. 7.15).
- 13 Stoneman 1995: general emphasis on nudity, 99; also 102–104. Ancient references to gymnosophists include Philo Every Good 74, 93 (see 94-96 for a version of the encounter between Alexander and the Indians, and favorable comparison between gymnosophists and Greek philosophers); Plut. Alex. 64.1-5 (with anecdote about the two traditions' philosophers meeting, 65.1–4); Clem. Al. Strom. 1.15 "Greek Philosophy Largely Derived from the Barbarians," in a passage that also speaks of the Hylobii who live outside all cities and wear the bark of trees (see below); Arr. Anab. 7.2.2 tôn sophistôn tôn Indôn tous gumnous "the naked men among the wise men of the Indians"; Diog. Laert. 9.35 (see also 1.1 on gymnosophists' place in the history of philosophy, 9.61 for their influence on Pyrrho of Elis).
- 14 Strab.: summary of Megasthenes, 15.1.59; of Onesicritus, 15.1.63-65; Hylobii dressed in tree bark (as also claimed by Clem. Al.), 15.1.60; Onesicritus finding philosophers sitting or lying down naked, 15.1.63.
- 15 Philosophers before the city, Strab. 15.1.63; eating uncooked food, 15.1.60. On sexual practices and the conversation with a ruler (here Alexander) see Alexander Romance and the sources summarized in Stoneman 1995: 99n2.
- 16 See Brown 1949: 24–53 and esp. 49–50; Stoneman 1994. Stoneman summarizes the suspicions concerning Cynic fabrication in Stoneman 1995: 104; he concludes that a meeting between Greeks (especially Alexander) and gymnosophists could have taken place, though the story now exists only as elaborated by Cynics (114).
- 17 Lucian De mort. Peregr. 15.
- 18 Thoreau, Walden, ch. 1, par. 19.
- 19 Strab. 15.1.59.
- 20 Montiglio (2000) sets the Cynics in the Greek context of wandering and learning, from Homer and Herodotus through and past Plato. Montiglio's account brings out the anti-Platonic aspects of Cynicism, similar to those revealed in their uses of dress. On Cynics and Anacharsis in particular see 101–102.
- 21 Montiglio 2000: "citiless, homeless," and ancient sources for the quote, 99n73; "This is the first time," 99. See Diog. Laert. 6.49 for more examples of the way Diogenes welcomed his permanent exile.

228 The philosopher's new clothes

- 22 Lucian Vit. auct. 11.
- 23 Diog. Laert. 6.53.
- 24 Bosman 2006: 97.
- 25 Diog. Laert.: Plato's overeating figs, 6.25; his expensive carpets, 6.26; rebuking Diogenes for not having paid court to Dionysius of Syracuse, 6.58.
- 26 Thus Nehamas 1998: 102.
- 27 This is John Cooper's view and his grounds for excluding the Cynics from his survey of ancient philosophies of life. See Cooper (2012: 61–62). For him the Cynics belong in social history.
- 28 Hanson 1990.
- 29 Hanson 1990: 119.
- 30 Diog. Laert. 6.41.
- 31 Pl. Sym. 175a-b, 220c-d; Montiglio 2000: 92-93.
- 32 Pl. Tht. 162b.
- 33 Pl. Ap. 20e-21a.
- 34 Pl. Chrm. 154d-e.
- 35 Pl. Euthyd.: setting in Lyceum, 271a; philosophical engagement as wrestling, 277d. Herrmann 1995.
- Perhaps the Carians functioned as what we call guinea pigs because they were widely used as mercenaries. Cicero says one experimented on them because they were fit for nothing else: *Flac.* 65, see also Gruen 2011: 344. Whatever the origin of the proverb, it meant that Carians were subjected to risks. Pl. *Lach.* 187b; Eur. *Cyc.* 654.
- 37 Pl. Euthyd. 285b-c.
- 38 Pl. Euthyd. 285c-d.
- Herod. 7.26.3. In many versions of the story Marsyas is vain and an upstart, but when Alcibiades compares Socrates to him (Pl. Sym. 215b–c) the satyr represents wisdom. Moralizing meanings about "hubris" do not necessarily enter into Ctesippus's allusion.
- 40 Rappe 2000: 295.
- 41 Pl. Prt. 321c.
- 42 Pl.: existing rhetoric lacks knowledge of souls, *Phdr.* 270b, 278c–d; existing tragedy leaves its author hidden, *Laws* 719c; see also *Rep.* 3.393c on the poet's "hiding himself."
- 43 Thoreau, Walden, ch. 1: "the philosopher not fed," par. 19; "New Hollander goes naked," par. 17; "an interesting question," par. 35.
- 44 Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts, pt. 1, par. 5.
- 45 Sartre 1989 [1945]: 13. In such contexts the shirt verges on underwear. Underwear raises fresh questions, being as it is neither clearly dress nor clearly nudity. For years now a man has stood in Times Square with a guitar, wearing nothing but briefs that say "The Naked Cowboy." Is this a new twist on the Liar's Paradox, clothing that says you have no clothing on? Or is it saved from contradiction inasmuch as underwear already says "I'm naked"?
- 46 Thoreau, Walden, ch. 1, par. 37.
- 47 Briggs 1854.
- 48 At this point what had been a look at clothes and jobs for philosophers most shows the extent of its indebtedness to Stanley Cavell's treatment of moral perfectionism, as that appears especially in Cavell 2004. Among the virtues that Cavell itemizes for moral perfectionists in a world far from perfected, the attachment to freedom and immunity to flattery bear precisely on the exemplariness that Cynics give up on but Plato and Thoreau refuse to.
- 49 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 100–101.
- 50 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 101.
- 51 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 38.

- 52 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 39.
- 53 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 39.
- 54 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 40.
- 55 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 71.
- 56 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 79.
- 57 Pl. *Tht*.189e–190a; and see also the similar account of thinking given by the Stranger at Pl. *Soph*. 263e. I use the clumsy verb "dialoguing" to capture in English the resemblance between the verb Socrates uses for "converse," namely *dialogos* "dialogue."
- 58 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 38.
- 59 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 39.
- 60 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 38.
- 61 Fear and Trembling was published in 1843, Walden 1854. I have no reason to believe that Thoreau knew of Kierkegaard.
- 62 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 45.
- Kierkegaard alludes to this folktale in his journal, *Journals and Papers*, I, 870. Commentaries on this passage identify the story's source in Mailáth 1827: II, 18. I am grateful to Dr. Lori Yamato for finding this magical shirt.
- 64 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 45.
- 65 Kierkegaard 1983 [1843]: 45; see also Journals and Papers, I, 870.

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Index

Adam and Eve 149, 180–2 Adorno, Theodor 116, 146 Aelian 7, 35, 191, 200 Aeschines 89, 96–7, 192 Agesilaus 191, 200 Aikman, Becky 133 Alcibiades 37, 94, 96, 194 Anacharsis 214 Anaxagoras 38, 44–5	 Berman, Marshall 183 black 9, 132–6, 144–150; "the new black" 147 Bloomer, Amelia 133 Bonfante, Larissa 186–8, 197, 199 boxing 60, 77, 86, 165, 188–91, 201 Brando, Marlon 142 Briggs, Charles Frederick 223 Brummell, Beau 121–5, 139–40
animal 8, 20, 53, 63–4, 80, 91, 180–3, 197, 204, 216, 219, 221; see also chicken, dog, doghead, donkey, grasshopper, pig, monkey, serpent, sheep	camouflage 137 Castiglione, Baldesar 132, 145 Cavell, Stanley 63, 113 Celsus 185
Antaeus 78–81	Chaerephon 218
anti-fashion 9–10, 111, 130–50, 160, 166, 171–2, 180–1, 220–3; <i>see also</i> black, suit, uniform, tattoo, shaved head	Chaucer, Geoffrey 148–50 chicken 7, 19–20, 93, 214–15 chitôn sewn garment 65, 164, 168
archê 52, 82–4, 90	Christianity 67, 77, 90, 213, 224–5
Aristippus 57–62	Cicero 60, 185
Aristophanes 5, 18, 36, 62, 97–8, 187, 192–3	circumcision 184–5 Croesus 155, 160, 162
Aristotle 4, 16–17, 19, 36, 49, 64–6, 77, 82–3, 85, 98, 167, 171	Ctesias 62 Cynicism 6–10, 16, 20, 30, 56–7, 61–4,
Aristoxenus 65	68, 90, 95, 101, 211–17, 220–6
armor 87, 164, 199–200, 204, 226	Cynosarges 16, 56
Artemidorus 88 Athenaeus 20, 65, 76	Cyrenaics 10, 30, 57–64
atopos absurd 5, 36-8, 46, 53, 63, 67, 81, 89, 94, 214	dandy 122–3, 139–40 David 184–5
Atossa 158, 161, 163 automatos self-caused, untaught 32–3, 50	democracy 51, 68, 84, 95–100, 122–3, 138, 141, 145, 148,
Axiothea of Phlius 170	155, 157, 166–7, 170, 187, 192–3, 199, 220, 222
Ballard, Lucinda 142	Derrida, Jacques 18
barbaros barbarian 3, 75, 91, 113, 159,	Derveni Papyrus 51-5, 82
161–6, 168, 186, 219	Diodorus Siculus 201
Batchelor, David 146 Baudelaire, Charles 145	Diogenes Laertius 56, 59–60, 189, 211, 213, 215

232 Index

Diogenes of Sinope 6–10, 19–20, 30, 56, 93, 211–17, 223
Dionysius Halicarnassius 190
Dioxippus 8, 200–4
doghead 53, 61–4, 74
donkey 49, 62–3
doxography 83
dream 63, 88, 91, 148–9, 158–60, 163

Egypt 62, 91, 144-5, 159, 161, 184 Eleusis 50 Empedocles 54 emperor's new clothes 113-15, 121-2, 125, 169, 180–1 Epaminondas 200–2 Epeios 201 Ephesians 10, 48–50, 54–5, 57, 68, 85, 92 Ephesus 24, 32, 48, 50, 55, 204 Epicharmus 54, 203 Epicrates 20 Epicurus 16, 33 Etruscans 160, 186 Euripides 76, 162, 201 Eusebius 60 eye 3, 62, 99, 147, 169–72, 181–2, 222

fashion 9–10, 83, 100–1, 111–72, 180–6, 211–17, 220–3; intellectual 101, 113 fig leaf 125, 157, 181–3 foreigner 9, 33, 95, 111, 118–19, 124–5, 130–3, 141, 143, 156–63, 185–6, 204, 213–17, 219, 222; see also barbaros Foreman, Richard 84

Galen 201 Genesis 80, 157, 182 grasshopper hair clip 164 Greenwood, John 120–3 gymnasium 7, 10, 16–17, 22, 28, 56, 68, 74–80, 95, 111–12, 168–70, 185, 191–2, 195, 200–4, 217, 219 gymnosophists 211, 213, 217

handshake 188–9
Hanson, Karen 116–17, 215–17
Harpies 86
Harvey, James 145
hat 159–60
Hecataeus 91, 98
Heraclitus 3–4, 38, 52, 54–5, 149; on
Delphi 3, 142; and natural philosophy, 48, 82
Herodotus 62, 87, 91, 137, 155, 158–67, 184, 186, 200

himation cloak 66, 95–9, 112, 155, 171 Hippias 17, 77, 166 Hippodamus 167 Hollander, Anne 132, 138, 140, 145, 149, 183

Iliad 17, 48, 54, 82, 87–8, 191, 201 imitativeness 9–10, 113, 117–25, 130–1, 143, 161–7, 216, 222 initiation, initiates 48, 50–4, 59, 161, 187, 196–9, 203, 220 Iris 74, 85–90; see also rainbow Iros 86, 88 Isadas 200–4 Isocrates 18, 77–8

jeans 9, 136, 139, 141–4 *Jubilees* 185 Jullien, François 182–7, 197

Kallipateira 190 Kant, Immanuel 1, 4, 7, 25, 119, 167 Kelly, Ian 139–40 Kierkegaard, Søren 67, 224–6 koruphaios headman 49, 90–4, 99, 101, 216, 225 kouros 187–9

Lamb, Charles 211
lamb, sheep 219, 225
laughter 64, 169–72, 190, 204
Lipovetsky, Gilles 116–19, 123, 135–7, 156
Locke, John 83, 119
Lucian 212–14
Lyceum 16–18, 22, 36, 64–5, 98, 196

Maccabees 185 magic, magicians 46, 144-5, 204, 219, 226 Marsyas 219–20 Martin, Richard 143 masculinity 95–7, 138–45, 148, 164, 188, 199, 204, 220 midwife 10, 31–8, 46, 61, 79, 88-9 monkey 118, 124, 216 monks 146, 224–5 Montesquieu 183 Montiglio, Sylvia 214 Morris, William 133 Mosley, Oswald 145 mourning 132, 144, 146, 148–9

122, 130 nudity 9–10, 28, 74–5, 78–81, 97, 101, 111–15, 119, 122, 135, 140, 142, 145, 149–50, 159, 165–72, 179–204, 213, 217–22; civic 199–203 O'Connor, Sandra Day 179 ocean 10, 48, 52, 54, 74, 82–3, 86, 221 Olympics 7–8, 35, 76–7, 100, 159, 164, 167, 189–91, 194–6, 198, 200, 203, 219 Orpheus 51–2, 82 Orphism 51, 82 palaistra wrestling room 16, 22, 75–6, 80–1, 196, 218 parergon digression 74, 90-4, 100 Parmenides 2–3, 30, 48, 77 Paul 77 Pausanias 189–91, 198 pederasty 75, 185, 187, 192, 195–8 Peirce, C. S. 142 peplos garment 161–2, 165 perception 26, 52–3, 59–60, 171, 215 Pherecydes 82 Philip the Good 132, 146 Philo Judaeus 211, 213 philosopher: as citizen 5–6, 9, 15, 68, 78, 95, 98–101, 187, 204, 216, 221–3; eccentric 4–5, 7, 10, 37–8, 94, 213–14; headmaster 92–3; teacher 1, 5, 7, 10, 15–21, 23–38, 44–68, 85–90, 96, 99, 101 philosophy: beginning of 4, 10, 63, 82–5, 130, 226; as genealogy 4, 36, 89; history of 24, 49, 83-4, 119; as profession 2, 4, 21, 25, 34, 36, 47, 63, 66–7, 100, 111, 113; as secret 37, 47, 51–5, 57, 61, 64, 68, 82, 85–90, 94, 169, 203, 226; as tradition 21, 24, 38, 44–9, 57, 67, 82–3, 211, 214; as (or in) writing 19, 27, 44–5, 52–7, 61, 76, 94, 189 Philostratus 201, 212 pig 53, 61–4, 74 Plato: Academy 7, 15–25, 31, 36, 45–6, 64–8, 93–4, 98–9, 170, 192, 215, 217, 224; Apology 5, 33, 44, 96, 98, 218; Charmides 22–3, 29, 66, 112, 196, 218; Critias 23; Euthydemus 22, 219; Laws 23, 26, 56-7, 80, 192, 194, 218; Lysis

22, 29, 76, 196, 218; Menexenus 53;

necktie 143, 156

Nietzsche, Friedrich 4–5, 9, 25, 51, 67,

Index 233 Parmenides 28, 77; Philebus 23; Phaedo 23, 26, 28, 44–5, 58, 93, 155, 167; Phaedrus 18, 23, 26, 44, 53-4, 75, 194; Protagoras 26, 32, 36, 47, 60-1, 77, 80, 220; Republic 6, 17, 23, 26-7, 32-3, 44, 46, 50, 55, 62, 65, 75, 78, 93, 112, 114, 125, 155, 167–72, 180–1, 190–1, 195; Second Letter 36; Seventh Letter 35-6, 50; Sophist 5, 23, 93; Statesman 5, 23; Symposium 5, 26, 28, 37, 75–6, 94, 96, 194, 217; Theaetetus 10, 15–100, 111–12, 181, 203–4, 216, 218, 224–5; Theages 35–6; Timaeus 23, 26, 82–3, 146 Pliny (the Elder) 185 Plutarch 56, 79, 80, 88, 155, 185, 200, 213 Polemo 65 Poliakoff, Michael 201 pôs in a way 52, 61, 85 Preston, Aaron 113–14 priest 67, 91, 98, 130, 138, 144, 146, 148, 159 Prodicus 18, 58 Protagoras 10, 18, 24, 29–30, 36, 47–54, 59–63, 74, 80–1, 85, 203 pumpkin 20, 93 rainbow 10, 74, 84–7, 90, 221 Rappe, Sara 219 Romm, James 62 Romulus 24 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 119, 125, 167, 183–4, 222 Santayana, George 113, 118, 125, 167 Scanlon, Thomas 195–6 scholarch 19, 65–6 scholê leisure, school 49, 90-2, 94 Scythian 159, 161, 167, 214 serpent 125 Serwint, Nancy 187 Shakespeare, William 183 shaved head 9, 143-4, 148, 172 shirt 11, 135, 145, 219, 222–3, 226 shoemaker 10, 38, 55–57, 61, 66, 170 Simonides 53 Skiron 78–9, 81 Socrates 4–6, 13–100, 155–7, 168–9; maddened 7, 66, 100; Socratic

schools 6–9, 10, 28, 30, 32, 35–6,

56, 58, 68

Solon 155, 192, 201

Solomon 24

234 Index

sôphrosunê moderation, temperance, self-control 15, 29, 65–6, 96–7
suit 9, 135–45, 149–50, 211
Sullivan, James 141
sunousia company, collegiality 7–8, 34–36
Svendsen, Lars 116–17, 135–6, 167

Tarrant, Harold 27–8, 35 tattoo 143-4, 148 technê profession, skill 36, 47, 55, 66, 80 teras monster, portent 87–90 Thales 88, 91, 204 Thersites 188 Thesleff, Holger 27 Thoreau, Henry David 11, 113, 118, 124-5, 157, 160-1, 166, 214, 216, 222-3, 226 tinker 55, 112 trousers 121, 133, 138-9, 159-60 Truth (book by Protagoras) 47, 52-3, 59 tuxedo 138-8, 145 tyranny 3, 35, 59, 75, 113–14, 118, 155, 162, 166, 215

uniform 87, 97, 100-1, 111

Van de Velde, Henry 133, 137 vanity 8–9, 32, 115, 119, 122 vases 81, 99, 157, 159, 186–8, 199 Vischer, Friedrich 113–114

wanderer 90, 168, 214–15, 217, 226
Watts, Edward 65
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 5, 15, 25, 51, 63, 147
wonder 26, 34, 52, 84–6, 88
wrestling 8, 16–17, 22, 29, 74–82, 112, 165, 168–9, 188–9, 192, 194, 196, 201–4, 217–19

Xenocrates 64–5 Xenophanes 76 Xenophon 16–17, 29, 35–6, 47, 56–8, 60–1, 191, 201

Zanker, Paul 67, 98–101, 211 Zeno of Citium 64 Zephaniah 125, 156, 161 Zhmud, Leonid 21